

CINEFANTASTIQUE®

SPECIAL TRIBUTE ISSUE

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HANNIBAL

ANTHONY HOPKINS

JULIANNE MOORE

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW!

**CROUCHING TIGER,
HIDDEN DRAGON**

OSMOSIS JONES

**DARIO ARGENTO'S
GIALLO HORROR**

**WES CRAVEN
DRACULA 2000**

**MARVEL COMICS
MOVIE MAGIC**

**SCI-FI'S 50 MOST
POWERFUL PEOPLE**

Volume 32 Numbers 6



CINEFANTASTIQUE

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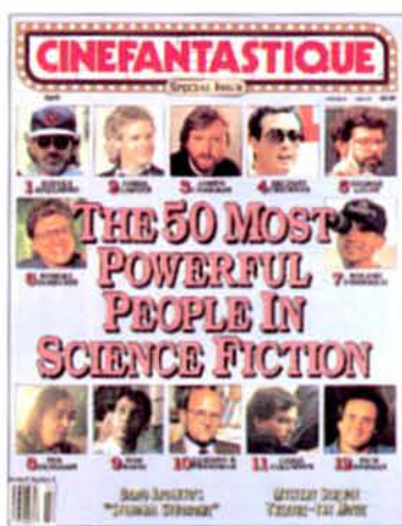
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After our preview of Argento's return to Giallo horror (pp 18), get this 1996 cover story on the career of the Italian horror maestro. **\$8.00**



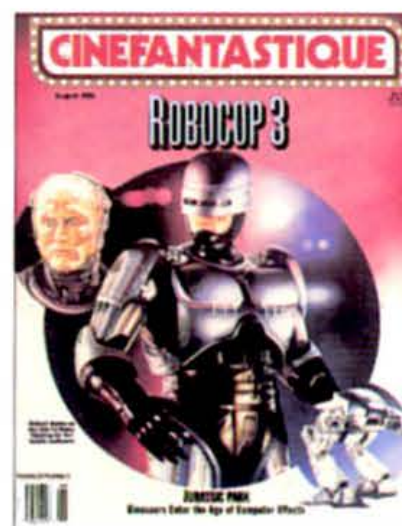
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CINEFANTASTIQUE

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"The Magazine with a Sense of Wonder"

FEBRUARY 2001

Fred Clarke made it hard. Hard to imagine never again hearing his voice on the other end of the phone; hard to realize that he won't be here at the office, keeping a secure watch on his mini-empire; hard to accept that the man who invented Cinefantastique, and pretty much the entire category of genre film journalism, will no longer be able to apply his enthusiasm, joy, and uncompromising attitude to the medium. He was not always the easiest man to deal with—having been steeped in the journalistic hotbed of the seventies, he often seemed to model his editorial persona on a construct that was composed of equal parts Ben Bradlee and Perry White: stubborn, intelligent, and fiercely proprietary about the realm he saw over. When he took his life this past October, he left behind a void that will never again quite be filled.

Fred Clarke made it easy. He was never afraid to take a chance, and encouraged those who worked for him to do so as well. If you got him started talking about a particular film or a certain director, the conversation—always sharp, always insightful—could last hours. Most importantly, if you approached the art of genre film as he did—regarding it as serious medium worthy of intelligent exploration and thoughtful critique—he would stick by your efforts with a tenacity and trust rare in any industry. Fred built *Cinefantastique* upon the simplest of precepts: treat the fans of science fiction, horror, and fantasy filmmaking with the respect that any thinking person would demand. The result was thirty years of the most distinctive journalism in magazine history.

Fred Clarke was a hard man who—thanks to his vision, his wit, and his generosity—has made it easy for us to carry on. Longtime CFQers Dan Persons, Lisa Coduto and Lisa Tomczak-Walkington will be taking over as editors of our magazines, Persons on *Cinefantastique*, Coduto and Tomczak-Walkington on *Femme Fatales*.

Frederick S. Clarke has moved on—what we continue here will stand as a tribute to his time on Earth.

—The Staff of Cinefantastique



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IN MEMORY: FREDERICK S. CLARKE 1948-2000

By Steven Jay Rubin

Men like Fred Clarke aren't supposed to die suddenly. They're supposed to hang around for a long while so that we can encourage people and organizations and universities to give them awards and honorary degrees, and toastmasters can raise glasses to their achievements and their place in the universe. But Fred wasn't interested in awards and toasts and honorary degrees. He wasn't interested in self-promotion or ego-building. He was an amazingly focused magazine publisher and one of the most passionate film buffs in the world and his professional life was devoted to one thing—*Cinefantastique*. Fortunately, he also had a wonderful personal life with his wife Celeste and his four beautiful children. They gave him balance, or so it seemed. But despite all that balance and focus, Fred couldn't lick the demons that plagued him since

he was little—the depression that sat on his chest and virtually took the life out of him. Beyond his family, there were no clues for most of us. His death came shockingly, even more so because he took his own life. Why would such an accomplished man do such a thing? There are no easy answers. And this is not the time to discuss them. What is more important is to appreciate the man and his creation—the magazine you hold in your hand.

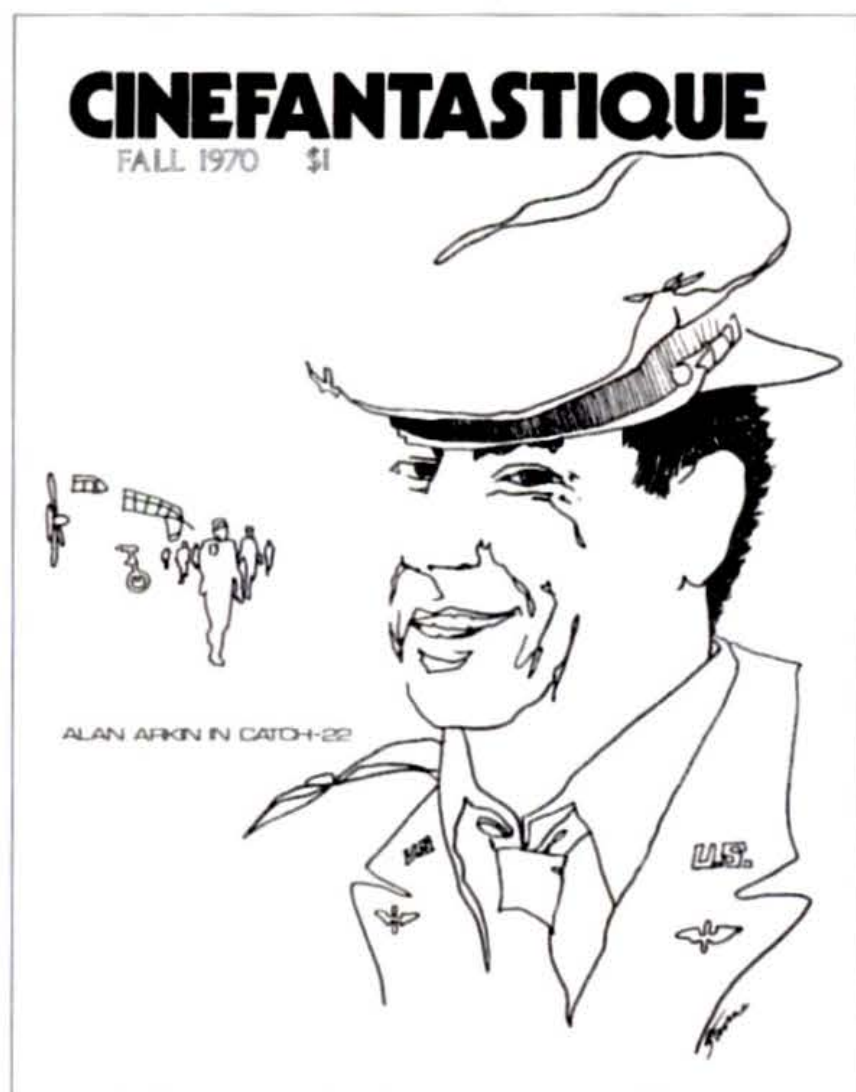
To understand Fred and his place in the world, you have to return to the late 1960s. For those of you who remember them, it was a turbulent era. John and Bobby Kennedy were dead. Vietnam was raging. It seemed that every human being in America over the age of ten was protesting the war, and by 1970, that was probably true. The Beatles were breaking up, *THE MOD SQUAD* was in its third season on ABC and *MIDNIGHT COWBOY* and *PATTON*

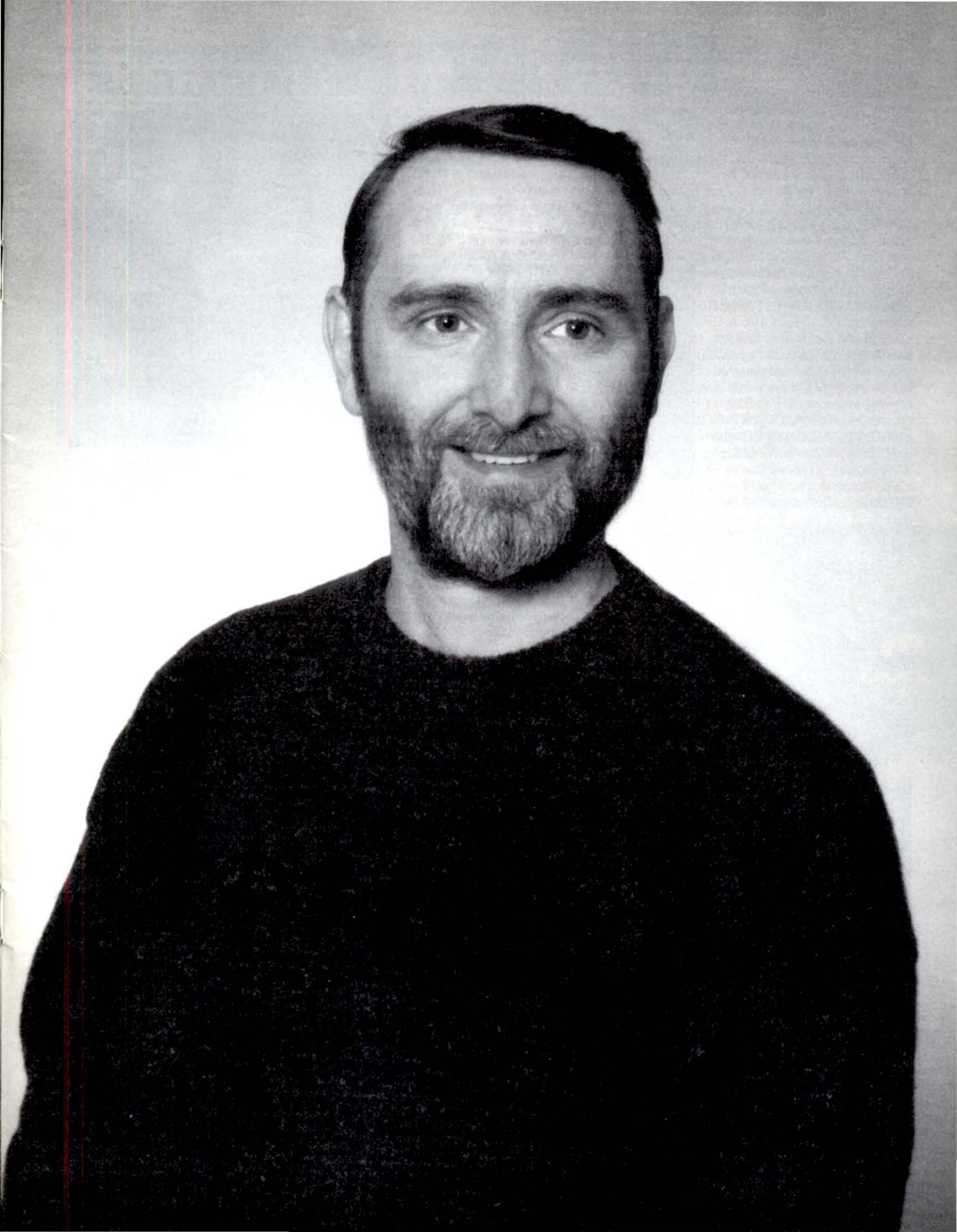
were being touted as Oscar winners. If you were a movie fan, you probably watched the classics with commercials every ten minutes, either on the "Million Dollar Movie" or the "Fabulous 52" or "Saturday Night at the Movies." If you were a collector, you owned a few movies on 16mm film—yes, that's right, 16mm film. There was no such thing as consumer videotape, or DVD, or the internet. There were revival houses that occasionally screened classics uncut, but they were hard to find in anywhere but the big cities. If you lived outside New York, Chicago or L.A., you usually owned the films themselves, sometimes illegally.

Beyond the film critics who occasionally published a book or two, science fiction, fantasy and horror film journalism and scholarship was virtually nonexistent in mainstream magazines. Forrie Ackerman was publishing *Famous Monsters*, but it

was a fan magazine, not an investigative look at film. There were fanzines like *Castle of Frankenstein* and *Proton*, but they weren't distributed everywhere. In Los Angeles, where I grew up, Larry Edmonds' Movie Bookshop in Hollywood was the corner drugstore for film buffs. You could buy actual film stills for a buck each, and every magazine that counted was sold there. In 1970, that included something new called *Cinefantastique*. The editor, publisher and chief writer was Frederick S. Clarke. Fred had been publishing fanzines for a while, out of his bedroom in Oak Park, Illinois. And now he was gambling on a legitimate magazine with national distribution. The first issue with Alan Arkin on its white cover ran 1000 copies and is a primo collector's item. The second issue of the planned quarterly run featured a lengthy article on George Pal. That's when I stumbled into Fred's world. I'd never read a film magazine in my life but, like Fred, I was a huge film buff looking for an outlet for my passion. At that time, I was making audio tapes of full length movies, memorizing dialogue, learning actors' names and taping them off the television with commercials intact. Ten years earlier I had stood in line at the Pickwood Theatre in West Los Angeles and watched Pal's *THE TIME MACHINE*. Now here was an article about the man who created the film and many others I suddenly remembered watching—*WAR OF THE WORLDS*, *TOM THUMB*, *THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM*, *WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE*. For some reason, I hadn't realized that filmmakers had careers, or lives, or identities. Like most people, I simply watched and enjoyed movies. If I recognized the actor, it was because he or she was a star, and was supposed to be recognized. In those days, you went to a John Wayne movie, or a Paul Newman movie or a Steve McQueen movie. Mainstream America didn't know about George Pal. Though the Europeans were touting the auteur theory, Alfred

The cover of *Cinefantastique*'s debut issue.





Hitchcock was probably our only recognizable auteur.

Fred raised the *CFQ* banner and, consequently, opened a behind-the-scenes window into a world we had loved for years. He assembled writers in New York and Los Angeles and London and told them to cover the creative side of science fiction, fantasy or horror films. He assigned them filmmakers to interview, movies to see, legends to contact. He wasn't interested in whom Steve McQueen was dating, or what kind of chocolate Elizabeth Taylor liked, he wanted to know how John Chambers was going to handle the makeup on the new *PLANET OF THE APES* film and what Rod Serling was up to. His writers also reviewed films of all kinds. Remember this was 1970, pre-*STAR WARS*. Science fiction, fantasy and horror were the bastard children of the cinema. Nobody paid them much attention as a serious genre. As far as film writers were concerned, *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* destroyed the credibility of the horror genre in 1948 and nobody was interested in reviving it, let alone covering it. The "Golden Age" of 1950s science fiction had been over for a decade. Aside from the wondrous *PLANET OF THE APES*, this was a fallow period for science fiction, the dead calm before the storm of *STAR WARS*. And fantasy, what was that? George Pal's career was pretty much over and Steven Spielberg was still working on *NIGHT GALLERY*.

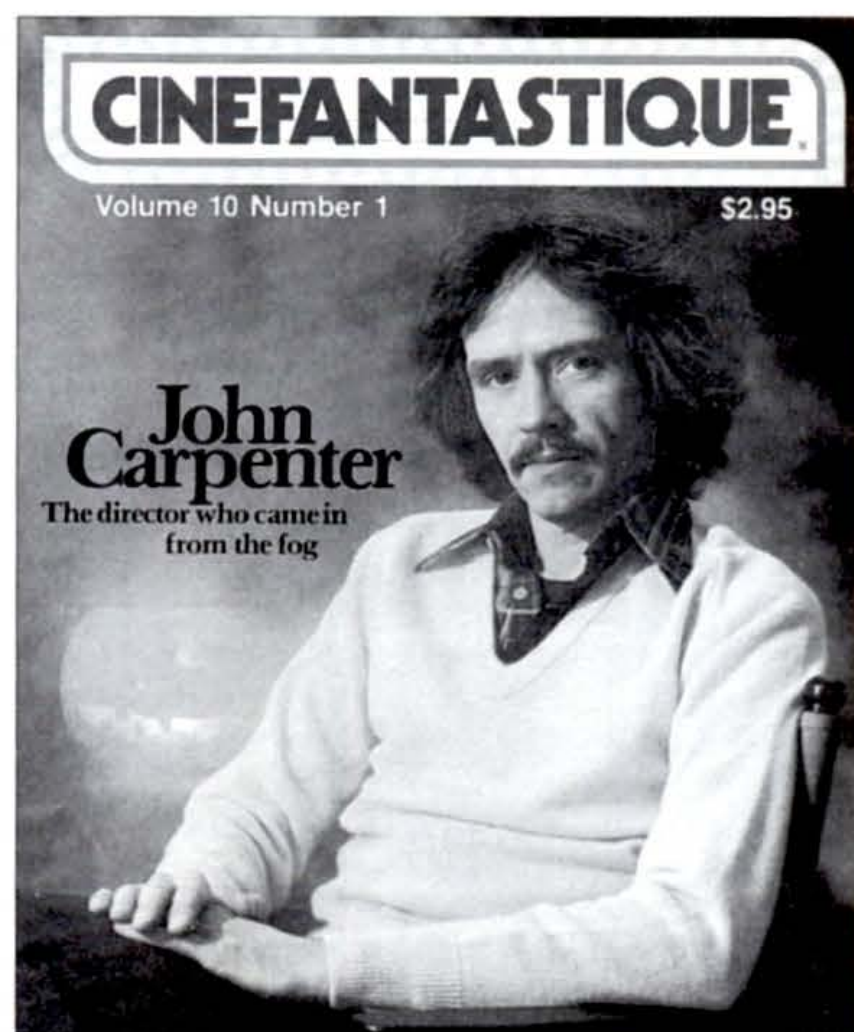
Fred had grown up at the movies. Without much family support (something that would cripple him later in life), Fred found solace in the balcony of Chicago movie palaces. He liked science and actually studied such arcane subjects as quantum physics, so he naturally fell in love with films like

FORBIDDEN PLANET, a movie he probably saw first run in the theater. Like Spielberg, Lucas, Bogdanovich, Ron Howard, Joe Dante, Scorsese and other contemporaries, Fred's movie experiences were love affairs with an art form that both fascinated him and stimulated his creative juices.

Although he dubbed me a "film archaeologist" in 1974, when I started researching the films of the 1950s for him, Fred had been digging for a good many years before me. He knew who filmmakers were and he had an encyclopedic memory for their films. At a time when film trivia was out of favor, he was a true film nerd—a badge of honor we wear today. Then, he was just eccentric Fred. But while hundreds of eccentrics published little fanzines with photocopied stills and tiny print, Fred published *Cinefantastique*, and with each issue his graphics became bolder, more stylish and professional. I'm not sure if *CFQ* has ever won a magazine design award, but I don't think anyone can quibble with the fact that Fred designed and assembled one of the most beautiful film magazines ever published. And his behind-the-scenes materials—full color stills, production designer drawings and blueprints, makeup and FX shots were second to none.

A generation of us grew up enjoying the magazine, and, if we were lucky, contributing a few good pieces. I had the privilege of getting my first professional bylines in *CFQ*. Fred not only offered me the opportunity to write lengthy behind-the-scenes pieces on my favorite films like *WAR OF THE WORLDS* and *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, but he encouraged me to dig deeper into the history of film. I didn't have to attend USC Film School to learn how movies were made and who made them. Fred and I were "gee-whiz" kids learning how our film memories were fashioned. Fred kept his gleefulness to himself, mostly, but I always knew in his words of encouragement and his writings that he was enjoying his place in the sun—starting as the pundit and later morphing into a true *enfant terrible* in the eyes of some studios and filmmakers.

Fred fought to get scoops and breaks and story angles that other magazines couldn't or wouldn't secure. And he pissed off a few people in the process. But who else covered cinema so well? Joe Dante paid him a great backhand-



Clarke courted controversy in Volume 10, Number 1 when his preview piece on *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* prematurely revealed Darth Vader's true identity.

ed tribute once by saying that he didn't allow Fred's journalists on his sets, but he read every issue anyway and thought no one covered movies like *CFQ*.

There are more magazines today. And we have VHS and DVD and the Internet and shows like *ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT* and *SHOWBIZ TODAY* on CNN. If you want a classic movie, you're going to be able to download it soon on your computer. And DVDs have extra features like interviews with the filmmakers—those same directors, writers, producers and special effects experts that came to prominence in a little magazine called *Cinefantastique*.

Fred taught us that these science fiction, fantasy and horror films—big and small—and their filmmakers were important—important enough to have their own histories and mysteries and questions that needed answering. He loved these films, good and bad, and he turned us from film nerds to superfans, winners basking in the glory of a genre that came of age. The publicists and promoters who thump genre films should name an award after him, after all, and it should be given to the sleeper genre hit of the year—a little film that someone found important enough to write about in a magazine or a newspaper or an Internet site. I think Fred would find that amusing. For, in a town that invented the "thumbs up," Fred was there first, using all ten fingers, leading the world in applauding the future of the films we love. □

(Steven Jay Rubin served as West Coast Correspondent for *CFQ* between 1975-1978. Following a 22-year career as a film publicist for the major studios, he became a producer last year with a deal at Showtime)

In 1992, Fred Clarke introduced *Femme Fatales* and a whole new set of controversies, to the world.



MARTIAL ARTS MASTERPIECE

An exquisite synthesis of Far East myth and magic.

By Alan Jones

Since its rapturous reception at the Cannes Film Festival, Ang Lee's *CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON* has been wowing audiences around the world causing spontaneous outbreaks of applause and inevitable standing ovations. While the science fiction blockbuster *THE MATRIX* was the first time general movie-goers had ever witnessed acrobatic Asian-style fight choreography taken to the balletic nth degree and finessed further by miraculous digital tinkering, Oriental fantasy followers have charted the genre's evolution through such landmarks as *SEVEN SAMURAI*, *A TOUCH OF ZEN*, legendary Bruce Lee's ground-breaking martial artistry, the *BABY CART/SHOGUN ASSASSIN* adventures and the *MR. VAMPIRE* series. Asian superstar Jackie Chan's mastery and director John Woo's startling stunt work represent other important quantum leaps in taking such peripatetic fables from the merely transcendental to the action-heavy sagas of today.

Back in 1981, director Tsui Hark redefined the martial arts fantasy with *ZU, WARRIORS OF THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN* by taking on board the technical advances made by the West in the wake of *STAR WARS*. Now, in a similar conjuring trick, Taiwanese director Ang Lee (after making three English language pictures in a row—*SENSE AND SENSIBILITY*, *THE ICE STORM* and *RIDE WITH THE DEVIL*) has gone back to his Chinese roots and taken Wang Du Lu's four-volume early 20th-century novel, set in the early 19th-century locale of his favorite childhood movies, layered on mythic fantasy, soul-consuming revenge and philosophical teachings and crafted the most exquisite thematic synthesis of every great Eastern epic ever made.

CROUCHING TIGER, HID-



Zhang Ziyi as Jen and Chow Yun Fat as Li Mu Bai. Right: Taking flight in director Ang Lee and choreographer Yuen Wo-Ping's martial arts ballet.

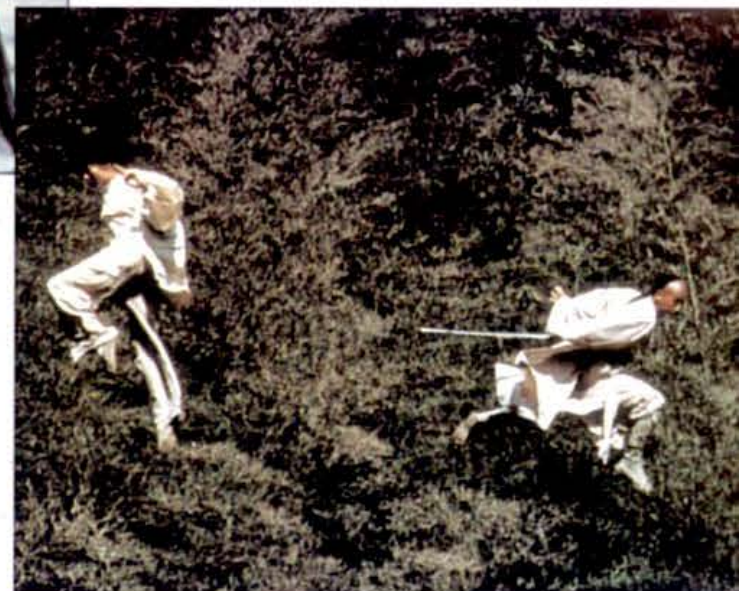
DEN DRAGON (the title refers to the hero lurking inside everyone waiting for the right reason to appear) is nothing short of monumental on every artistic front. It's a splendidly resonant fairy tale loaded with high-tone romance, palpable emotion and significant sacrifice, and it shows Lee in complete narrative command at the top of his vibrant filmmaking form. The acting by charismatic Chow Yun Fat and, especially, ex-Bond Girl Michelle Yeoh (*TOMORROW NEVER DIES*) and *THE ROAD HOME*'s Zhang Ziyi packs a diamond-hard eloquence. And its thrilling visual style, unquestionably the new seismic watershed by which all others will be judged, is guaranteed to set your eyes on fire.

The quintessentially Chinese melodrama is set in the Qing dynasty (just as western powers were forcing the country open for the opium trade) and revolves around martial arts wizard Li Mu Bai (Yun Fat) finally hanging up his magical sword, the Green Destiny, to devote the rest of his life to meditation after being unable to save his late master from

the demonic skills of the witch-like criminal Jade Fox (Cheng Pei-pei). His trusted close friend, would-be lover, and warrior in gravity-defying Wudan Mountain fighting skills Yu Shu Lien (Yeoh) coaxes him into giving the sword to powerful Beijing politician Governor Yu (Li Fazeng) as a mark of respect. But when it's stolen by his masked daughter Jen (Ziyi)—a disciple of Jade Fox who is masquerading as her governess—Li arrives in the city to take his festering revenge. With a police inspector and his kick-boxing daughter thrown into the plot, along with the impressed Li offering Jen a chance to train in Wudan combat and selflessness, and a doomed romance between Jen and desert outlaw Dark Cloud (Chang Chen) told in lengthy, lyrical flashback, the spectacular scene is set for the inevitable Li/Jade Fox face-off where everyone's destiny converges in symbolic tragedy and spiritual uplift.

A moving and universal theme, well-drawn moody char-

acters, lush sets and sumptuous costumes, atmospheric pathos and magnificent cinematography (by *THE KILLER* and *THE BRIDE WITH WHITE HAIR*'s Peter Pau), Lee's masterpiece holds every trump card in one unbeatable hand. However, it's the amazing fight sequences that will etch themselves indelibly on the memory. Expertly choreographed by *MATRIX* master Yuen Wo-Ping as elaborately energetic ballets, the protagonists run up walls, dance over rooftops, spiral over



buildings, propel themselves through the air as if fired by cannons, float through forests, alight on trees and battle as the branches bend with their weight. Breathtaking, dazzling and brilliantly executed (and superbly augmented with a striking score by symphony percussionist Tan Dun), nothing in either the annals of Fantasia or wannabe Hollywood knock-off will have prepared you for their stunning impact.

Ending not as you'd expect with a slam-bang furious fist fest but on a wonderfully affecting moment of pure spine-tingling truth where unconditional love is declared in absolute terms, Ang Lee's inspirationally bold and haunting tale is one of the finest fantasies ever produced in the Far East. Move over *A CHINESE GHOST STORY*, and enter the *DRAGON*. □

HANNIBAL

Director Ridley Scott films the Thomas H. Harris shocker—an exclusive preview!

By Douglas Eby

Based on the sequel novel by Thomas Harris, *HANNIBAL* continues the story of Dr. Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) who escaped from custody at the end of *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, and is now living the life of an aristocrat in Europe, but pursued by one of his victims, Mason Verger (Gary Oldman).

Grotesquely disfigured after being thrown to a pack of dogs, Verger wants to involve Clarice Starling (Julianne Moore) in a plot to kill Lecter in a similar manner. Director Ridley Scott has commented about whether *HANNIBAL* should be considered a horror film. "I do love the genre, but I wouldn't call it a horror; sometimes horror can disguise itself and take many shapes, as in *ALIEN*, which, although science fiction, had very strong horror elements. I would

Italian acting icon Giancarlo Giannini as Rinaldo Pazzi, an Italian cop trained by the FBI, on Hannibal's trail.



Scott, the auteur of *ALIEN* and *BLADERUNNER*, rehearses Oscar-winner Anthony Hopkins, who returns in the titular role, opening Valentine's Day 2001.

rather define the picture as a psychological thriller." He also confirmed he was happy with the story, and said, "I do agree with the ending given by the screenplay. Also, Thomas Harris gave his approval to Steve Zaillian's work."

David Mamet had done an early draft, but Zaillian (*MIS- SION: IMPOSSIBLE*, *SCHIND- LER'S LIST*) didn't want to rewrite Mamet's draft: "It seemed a peculiar thing to do," Zaillian said. "So I basically started over with the book. I think Lecter has changed over the years. I was just reading *Red Dragon* again recently, and he's basically described by all who meet him as a monster; plain and simple, just a monster. He's grown to have his own kind of strange morality over the next couple of books. And over the

years, I think Tom Harris has tried to figure him out. Tom was involved in the screenplay, to the extent that we all got together and talked about it, early on, before I started. And he's been sent every draft, and made his comments, so he stayed involved."

Referring to all the interest and durability of serial killer characters in films, Zaillian said he doesn't think of Dr. Lecter that way. "I guess technically he is, but certainly in *HANNIBAL* and I think in *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, he has his reasons for killing the people he does. There's no randomness to it. And the strange thing about Hannibal is that, because you get to know him, you actually, in a strange way, want him to get away. As Tom says in the book, since he escaped whatev-

er it is, seven years before, 'He's hardly killed anyone.' For him, that's like living a peaceful life and not troubling anyone. Until someone goes after him, which is one of the characters, Verger. Verger was a pedophile, and in the back story in the book, Lecter destroys his face so he couldn't fool children any more. He made him look hideous. He'd had a very kind, open face that children trusted, so now he doesn't. Lecter's intent was to disfigure him, not to kill."

Verger is now seeking revenge on Lecter, plotting to kill him using carnivorous hogs specially bred for the purpose. Zaillian said he hasn't seen the actual boars used in the movie, but he understands Ridley Scott "liked them an awful lot; he got to become quite fond of them." According to one story, 6000 hogs were initially auditioned and 15 sold to the production. Verger is confined to a hospital bed, but is able to monitor Lecter's movements and whereabouts.

Asked if Verger makes use of the internet in some way, Zaillian noted, "It does come into play a little bit with him, but it is used more by the authorities. One of the things that was important to me was, if we were going to use the internet at all, was to use it in a way that is real. A lot of times in movies, you see things that are too sophisticated or can't happen on the internet, or with computers in general. In this film, it's used in a realistic way. I tried it out myself. I'm not an



Hopkins as Lecter, turning the tables on his pursuer in Florence, as Giannini's police inspector meets a bad end.

expert on computers or the internet, but it was fun doing that. The way they're used in the film is not too complex for anyone to understand."

The casting of Julianne Moore, rather than Jodie Foster, as Clarice Starling did not cause any changes in the script, Zaillian said. "When we found out that Jodie had decided not to do it, there was a lot of talk about that, and talk about changing the character's name, or making a new character altogether. But after many conversations, we decided to leave it. It's not a first, people have done it many times before in films, like James Bond, and even Lecter. One of her first lines is something like 'I'm agent Clarice Starling,' so we get it over with in the first scene."

He also had no particular interest or need to change Lecter, Zaillian said. "I don't know any more about him than anybody else. I know him from the books and from *SILENCE* and from *MAN-HUNTER*, but I was not particularly interested in his back story, meaning his childhood, which is dealt with to some extent in the book. And I get the feeling that most people aren't interested, that it's more about what he is now, not what made him that way. It's not a sociological study."

A favorite of the new characters for Zaillian was Pazzi, the Italian detective. "He's a good guy, up to no good," he said. "You like him, but you know he's on very shaky ground with Lecter, from the very beginning. He was delineated very well in the book, and with much relish; it's a very entertaining part of the book."

One of the film's locations is Florence. Novelist Harris reportedly visited Italy in 1994 and joined hundreds of spectators at the trial of the "Monster of Florence," Pietro Pacciani, accused of being one of Europe's worst serial killers and charged with committing eight double murders from 1968 to 1985. Perhaps an inspiration for part of the story. While filming there, producer Dino De Lau-

rentiis assured the mayor and citizens that the movie and Ridley Scott's direction would "represent Florence's atmosphere, culture and loveliness in a way that has never been portrayed before."

There is also stage work in Florence for the final scene. One of production designer Norris Spencer's earlier films, *PLUNKETT & MACLEANE*, had a very distinctive visual tone, and he noted, "The look of *HANNIBAL* comes from whatever is in the script, and primarily from speaking with Ridley Scott. I liked *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, a lot, personally, but I have to say that Ridley's interpretation of *HANNIBAL*, then reading the book, with its intensity, was far more riveting to me than *SILENCE*. I didn't

Wild, man-eating boars attack, a combination of trained animals and animatronic effects, part of pedophile Mason Verger's gruesome plan to kill Hannibal.



"I do love the genre, but I wouldn't call it horror, sometimes disguised, like *ALIEN*," said director Ridley Scott. "I would rather define the picture as a psychological thriller."

really look at it again, until two or three weeks into principal photography, because I didn't want it to influence me." He said the main difficulty was "getting it done rapido, and dealing with the logistics of flights between Florence, Washington, Richmond and Ashville," the other filming locations.

He said an opening scene in the fish market, where Starling has a shoot-out, "was kind of worrying, trying to make it believable. Shooting in the real Palazzo Vecchio was mind-boggling, and of course, shooting in Florence with all that art stuff, and that history. It was really wonderful, and a privilege to be nurtured and looked after by the people and the mayor of Florence." He noted there was no real need to change the Italian exteriors: "It worked, as far as I was concerned. Always with Ridley's blessing, of course."

Referring to her character, FBI agent Clarice Starling, Julianne Moore commented, "Of course people are going to compare my interpretation with that of Jodie Foster's, which was wonderful, but the film is going to be very different. The biggest change is that it's 10 years on. In [the earlier film] Clarice was a student. In *HANNIBAL* she has a lot more authority. She's moved on." Moore also noted Starling has been "working on different squads, I think the last one was a drug squad." Moore thinks Lecter has "a certain kind of admiration" for Starling. "She is so steadfast in her pursuit of him. And because of her kind of intense morality in a way. I think she has a real respect for him as a dangerous per-

ANTHONY HOPKINS

The Oscar-winner on his return as Hannibal.

By Douglas Eby

Anthony Hopkins said the script for HANNIBAL was never an issue. "When I was offered the part, I accepted it without even reading the script." In a published interview, Hopkins commented on the enduring public fascination with the serial killer character: "I suppose the Jungian psychoanalysts would say it's the shadow that we all have in us. It's his certainty, his calmness, that probably we envy. When I first played Lecter many years ago, I had an instinct about him, about his voice and about the way he moved and his calmness. So I tapped back into that part of myself which is calm and certain, and I hope, witty."

Referring to his first day on set, Hopkins said, "I never get excited or nervous. I have a motto, which is, 'Lower the expectations. Don't expect much. Be calm, quiet, relaxed and peaceful.' And it seems to work." Hopkins also commented about getting into character as Lecter, "You don't have to go places. I didn't have to live in a prison in order to do the part. I keep it very straight, simple. And when I read the first part, SILENCE OF THE LAMBS, ten years ago, I just read the script many times to get the feel of the man. It doesn't take concentration and intensity. Intensity's the worst thing that you can have. People say to me, 'You must be such an intense person to play Hannibal Lecter.' I say, 'No, I'm not.'"

Going ahead with the film

is "a bit of a surprise" Hopkins said. "For years, people were talking about a sequel and I said, 'Oh yeah, yeah, I'll believe that when I'm standing in front of the camera.'"

The crucial role of Clarice Starling is played this time by Julianne Moore, and Hopkins said of her, "She's a nice woman. She keeps her work very simple. It's like Jodie Foster. And Ray Liotta. People who just show up on time, hit the marks, do the job. It makes life easy. That's what they call chemistry. Relax, do your job. Have fun with it. That's chemistry."

Referring to his character at the beginning of the film, set in Florence, Hopkins commented, "I wanted to play him as a man bored by his retirement from public life. So he's indolent and he's bored. A little world-weary. And suddenly, he hears that they're after him again and he thinks, 'Good. Back into action.' Lecter tends to be slightly super-human. He does things which no ordinary human can

Hopkins as Lecter, knifing FBI agent Krendler, who has made the mistake of disturbing the killer's retirement in Florence. "He tends to be slightly super-human."



Hopkins in "cannibal" mode, attacking a nurse played by Cynthia Neilson. The actor noted that he signed-on to the sequel without even reading the script.

do. Nobody questions how he got away in the last movie. How has he lived his life in Florence all these years without being disguised? I discussed that with Ridley Scott and I said I think he likes to live right on the razor's edge, and has no fear. It's like he's taunting them, the FBI, the Italian police. And they don't even catch him because he's so obvious."

Lecter has tracked Starling for years via the internet, Hopkins noted. "He is more seduced by her than he ever was before. Between them, there is a sort of 'black love story' growing...And he decides to write her: 'Dear Clarice, I hear you're in trouble with the FBI.' Then there's a line we put in a letter that says, 'I hear you may be back on the case. If so,

goodie. I need some action.' Starling was a young and courageous girl when she first met him. And it amuses him. He admires her because she's bright, and thinks she's very brave. She's smart and she's not rude. He hates rude people. He hates the cheap, nasty people, the third-raters, like [FBI agent Paul] Krendler who are corruptible. But she's incorruptible and he admires her for that. He has fun with her, teases her, torments her."

One part of shooting HANNIBAL that Hopkins said he especially liked was working with Ridley Scott. "One thing I've learned over the last few years is to have more respect for directors," Hopkins said. "They have a hell of a big job on their hands. I'm not too keen on the guys who want to shoot take after take. What's great working with Ridley Scott or Spielberg or Oliver Stone, is that they use two takes, three takes, and that's it. You don't need any more. Scott is very calm, very easy, a very quiet man. He's very flexible, very open to suggestions. And it makes it so much easier to work for a director of that nature. So I had complete confidence. He makes it effortless. He's the sort of director who trusts actors. I trust that he knows his job, and he trusts that I know mine." □

"Of course, people are going to compare my interpretation with that of Jodie Foster's which was wonderful," said Julianne Moore, but the film is going to be very different."

son. She's quite aware that he is a sociopath and how dangerous he is, but she is also pretty determined to capture him at any cost. I don't think she completely knows him. She knows she's tracking a criminal and that she's dealing with somebody who's not normal in his behavior. There's a certain amount of wariness that goes along with that."

Moore has also expressed her enthusiasm for Anthony Hopkins. "He is one of the best actors in the world," she said. "I think he could do anything. I've seen him do many, many kinds of roles and it's just so much fun to be around him and a privilege to watch him work. He's very grounded. I think that's one of the things that makes him a great actor. He has a marvelous mind, a great imagination and he really connects when you work with him."

Moore has not really been involved in the mania about the books and the making of this new film. "I didn't go on the Net or anything like that," she said. "I did read the book, worked on the script, and talked to the FBI. That's the kind of stuff I think is important." According to a press report, Moore spent several weeks at the FBI training camp at Quantico. Kirk Crawford, a spokesman for the Bureau has been quoted: "To train Julianne, we had to get special permission from our headquarters. It was quite an unusual request. The thing is, we train all the FBI agents out here and so we really hate it when we see people playing FBI agents in the movies and getting it all wrong. It is misinformation. So we are happy to have given her basic training. Julianne had pretty basic training. She learned

By purchasing movie rights to Thomas Harris' first novel chronicling Hannibal Lecter, *Red Dragon*, producer Dino De Laurentiis holds the first option on the movie rights to any of Harris' novels involving the character. That initial purchase resulted in the 1986 film *MAN-HUNTER*, starring Brian Cox as Lecter. Press reports say De Laurentiis is already planning a remake, based on the popularity of the books, and Anthony Hopkins' Oscar-winning performance opposite Jodie Foster in 1991's *THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, which won five Academy Awards and made Dr. Lecter such an icon. Early last year, *Variety* reported that De Laurentiis paid \$10 million of his own money for film rights to the sequel novel *Hannibal*, which one reporter said helped make him the "last active member of a legendary handful of Italian producers."

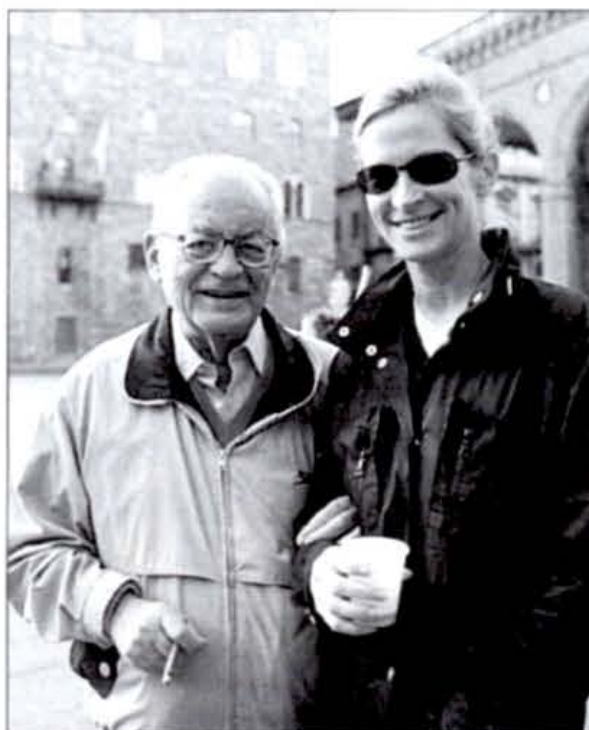
De Laurentiis himself said, "I'm probably the last truly independent producer that exists in America. When I want to buy a book, I buy it with my own money instead of going to a studio. If you depend on a studio you become that studio's employee. You sit around while 44 people rule on every decision, then maybe you get the project, maybe you don't. Doing things my way means I've lost millions on certain deals over the years. Clearly, not every decision is the right one. But I've managed to avoid being a studio slave and remain my own boss."

He also thinks the purchase of the rights to the novel has been well worth the money he spent. "Without it, we wouldn't be here [making this movie], and if you add to the story, as

HANNIBAL

DINO DE LAURENTIIS

The last of the old-time movie moguls.



De Laurentiis on Florence locations with wife and co-producer Martha De Laurentiis, bank-rolled the film with his own millions.

in this case, a great director and some great stars, you could say we have made 'Bingo.' Activity to pre-sell the \$80 million film in foreign markets has been reduced. "Once Universal [Pictures-International] saw how much attention the film was getting, they realized there was less pressure to sell the film," De Laurentiis explained.

Now 81, he said his stamina comes from still having "three C's: cuore, cervello and coglioni," referring to heart, brains and balls. "As long as you have the three C's, you're ageless," he said. "Thankfully, I'm still in good shape because I hope to make a lot more films yet." He began producing at age 19 after leaving home to become an actor, and has produced, presented, financed and distributed more than 600 films, plus built three major studio facilities. His productions have earned 33 Academy Award nominations and have been recognized with close to 100 different awards worldwide. He was recently awarded the 2000 Lifetime Achievement Award at

this year's Cinema Expo International Convention. His films have ranged from *LA STRADA* to *BARBARELLA* to *U-571*, and now *HANNIBAL*, produced along with his wife Martha.

A magazine story about his activity as producer said he was so "canny" about developing this project that he had his personal pasta chef sent to Miami to cook for novelist Harris, presumably so the writer would finish *Hannibal* faster. Although De Laurentiis is sometimes characterized as "difficult" to work with, to put it politely, *HANNIBAL* screenwriter Steve Zaillian said what

stands out about the project was working with De Laurentiis, "and all the people, his wife Martha, and Ridley Scott. I had originally been rather coy about the whole thing. I was ambivalent because it was a sequel, and I'm generally not interested in sequels. But they talked to me for about three weeks about the story. They are remarkable people, and were fun to work with. Honestly, the thing I remember best about it is their friendships, which is not something you can say about most things you work on. It's sort of like, as soon as it's over, you go off and never see the people again. But I think I'll be seeing them again."

De Laurentiis has commented, "This profession of ours is something you have to love passionately because if a film isn't made with great love it shouldn't be made at all. This is not an industry of prototypes; every film has a different set of problems, a different story. That's what makes it so exciting not just in terms of artistic creativity but also technical creativity."

Douglas Eby

HANNIBAL

FRANCESCA NERI

The cannibal's ill-fated opera flirt.

Beautiful Italian actress Francesca Neri is Allegra Pazzi, wife of Inspector Rinaldo (Giancarlo Giannini). "My part is not very long, but I think it is an important one; in fact I meet Hannibal almost immediately, but I don't know who he really is. He approaches me because he wants to banquet on me!" explained the Italian actress, who previously worked extensively in Spain for International Directors: Pedro Almodovar (*LIVE FLESH*), winning the "Nastro d'Argento" award for Best Actress, Carlos Saura (*DISPARA!*) and Bigas Luna (*LAS EDADES DE LULU*).

"We meet at the Opera, shot in Santa Croce," continues Neri. "We are performing Dante's *Inferno*, but a new soundtrack has been written and added to the scene. It's a very exacting moment but Hopkins is a gentleman and he's very supportive."

"I really loved the first film and now to work with such professional people as Julianne Moore, Ridley Scott, and Anthony Hopkins is great. To me it's like a dream come true. But I am really thankful to Dino De Laurentiis for giving me the opportunity to act for the first time alongside Giancarlo Giannini."

Neri noted that Giannini, her detective husband in the film, is trying to capture Hannibal. "He's the curator of the library. Personally, my character loves opera and I have convinced my husband to buy tickets. There is



Neri plays the wife of Florence police inspector Pazzi, who bonds unsuspectingly with Hannibal at the opera, where the two discover a passion for the same text.

an important scene at the Opera house where we encounter Lecter, but she doesn't know that he has a double role, a double life in the film.

"When I first meet him, he seems like a normal person to me, and I'm interested in him because he has a copy of a play we're looking at. And immediately there is a feeling of sadness between the two of us because we both know a passage by heart. So we play with a double entendre of the text and there's a little game going on there."

Hopkins, who wore black sunglasses during the press con-

ference that inaugurated production last June, refused to take them off, even when asked by a German reporter who wanted to take some pictures. Hopkins looked very peevisish, but Neri took on his defense, "He pretends to be cantankerous when he meets the reporters, but working with him is marvelous. He is very nice and funny. He always tells jokes. Being able to work with Anthony Hopkins is an amazing experience."

Neri said she enjoyed shooting the film in Florence, in her native country. "I've worked a lot in Tuscany, but it's my first time in Florence," she said, "It's strange to be working in Florence on an American film. Florence is like the heart of Italy, so to work on an American film with a foreign director in the Italian city, I feel like a foreigner in Italy."

Neri had praise for director Ridley Scott. "Working with Ridley is easy because it's simple.

He is very clear in what he wants and from the first encounter we had, he told me immediately what he was looking for. What's refreshing about him is that he always thanks the actor for the work they're doing, and that does not happen in Italy."

How does Neri account for the public's fascination with Hannibal Lecter? "SILENCE OF THE LAMBS was so well done, so well directed and so well acted that it's normal. People can't wait to see what will happen next."

Roberto D'Onofrio

"Florence is like the heart of Italy," said Francesca Neri, "so to work on an American film with a foreign director in the Italian city. I felt like a foreigner in Italy."

how to handcuff and how an agent would act or think in a given situation."

Moore found Ridley Scott to be "really great. He surprised me when I met him. I don't know what I expected but he's very soft-spoken and gentle. He's bright and quick and incredibly detail-oriented." Making *HANNIBAL* has been an enjoyable experience, she reported. "I've had a really good time."

Giancarlo Giannini plays Rinaldo Pazzi, an Italian policeman trained by the FBI at Quantico, where Hannibal Lecter was a textbook case. Giannini commented about filming in Florence, "Oh, this is wonderful. It's very exciting for me because I'm in a town that I love. Florence is one of the best cities in the world." He said when he first read the script he thought it would be very difficult to do. "Pazzi is an inspector with ambition who wants money, and in the end he dies in a terrible way. He is a monster and chooses money over glory and many people die as a result."

Giannini was enthusiastic about working with Ridley Scott. "He's one of the best directors in the world," he said. "I know his movies frame by frame. He's an artist. He knows how to speak with the actors in a different way because he understands the psychology of an actor. And he likes to have very particular images with a shadow, a particular angle of the face. It's very exciting to work with him."

Ray Liotta, who plays FBI agent Paul Krendler, acknowledged Steve Zaillian as "a great writer" and noted the story "is coming from Thomas Harris' book, so we're not talking about

JULIANNE MOORE

On filling Jodie Foster's shoes as Clarice Starling.

By Edward Gross

Sequels are a bitch.

Filmmakers and studios are forced to walk the fine line between delivering what the audience expects, and offering just enough that is new, which will hopefully be enough to draw people back to theatres. It's a tough enough struggle made even tougher when one of the original film's stars refuses to reprise his or her role. Such is the dilemma faced by director Ridley Scott and the makers of *HANNIBAL*, who hired Julianne Moore to fill in for Jodie Foster as CIA agent Clarice Starling.

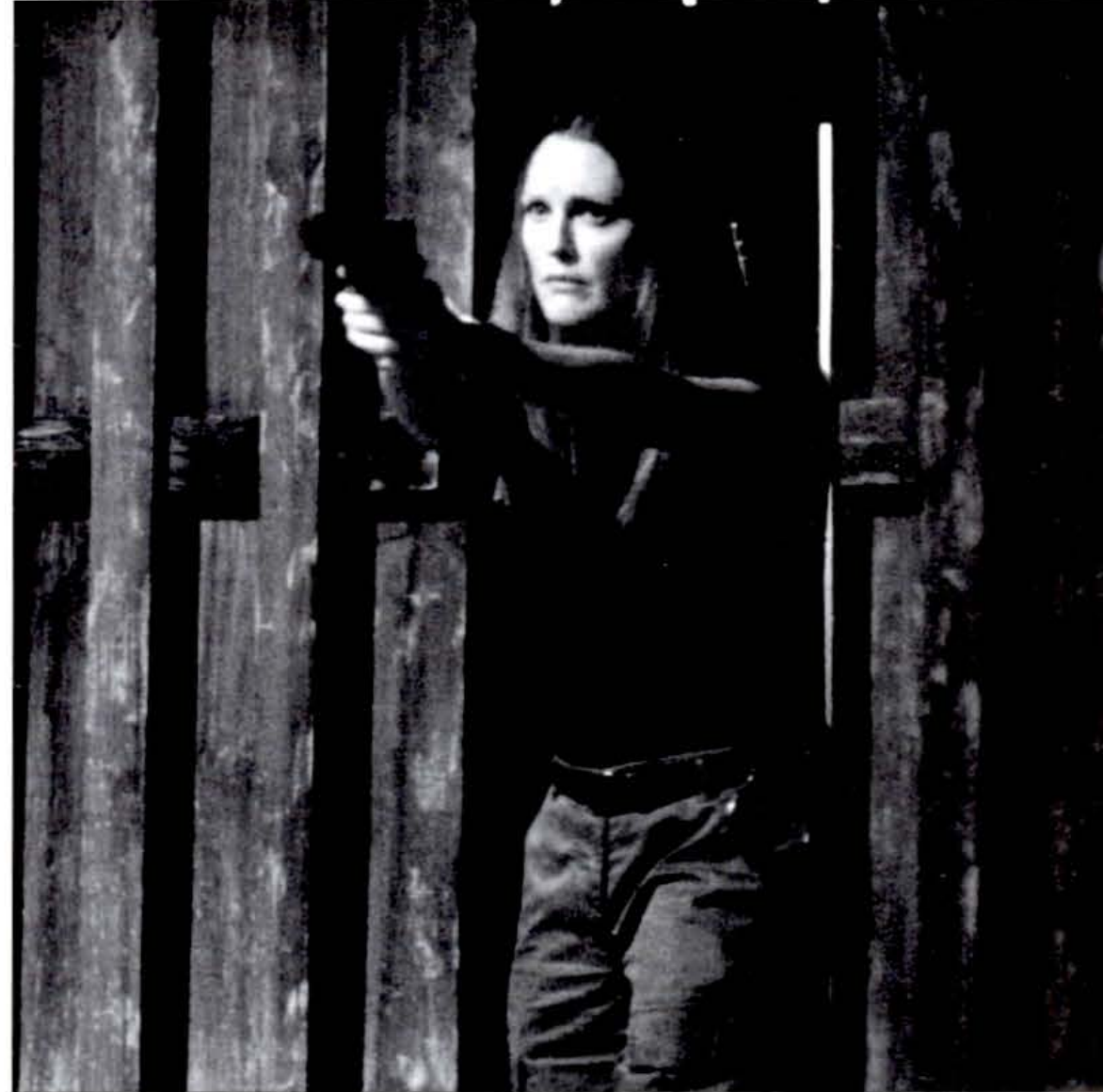
The only person who seems unaffected by it all, is Moore herself. "It's been great," she enthused. "I mean, it's an interesting movie because there are a million different tones in it. One day we'll be doing stuff that's very much action-oriented, or we'll spend a whole week doing an action scene. And the next week, we'll be doing an intense acting scene or something. We'll spend all our time on that. And then you'll do something that's more like a thriller. So the pace of it has changed from week to week, and the tone has changed, so that's been really fun and a big challenge."

Facing challenges has been a part of Moore's vocation since she was in high school, and set her sights on acting in the first place. "I had a teacher who told me that it was something that people do for a living, which hadn't occurred to me," she said. "Because I didn't know anybody who

did, and I just saw actors on television and in the movies. They weren't real, particularly. So she said, 'You can try, and you can go to school and you can study it.' I wanted to, and so, much to my parents disappointment, I did. They actually sent me to school and everything and they were great. My teacher was a very adventurous drama teacher for a high school."

Although she managed some theatre work, Moore made her filmed acting debut on the TV soap opera *AS THE WORLD TURNS*. From there, she moved to small parts in such feature films as *SLAUGHTERHOUSE 2* (1988), *TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE: THE MOVIE* (1990), and *THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE*, before hitting the big time as the star of Steven Spielberg's *THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK*.

"Steven Spielberg saw me in *THE FUGITIVE*, which I was in for three minutes, and flew me to California for a meeting," Moore explained. "I was like, 'Get out! Do you really want me?' So he



Moore as FBI agent Starling, playing an older, more assured crimefighter.

flew me out here and I sat in his office at Amblin, and he said that he liked me and he'd like to work with me some day. He hoped that something would come along. I was like, 'Absolutely, any time.' And, sure enough, a few years later, I got a phone call asking me to come in and talk about *THE LOST WORLD*. That's how it happened. Truthfully, I was terrified [meeting Spielberg]. I didn't know what to expect. And he's the friendliest, nicest guy in the world. He's so accessible, and so normal. And just kind of eager to be friends. He's that kind of a guy. So he put me at ease right away."

She left the *LOST WORLD* for *THE MYTH OF FINGERPRINTS* and the critically acclaimed *BOOGIE NIGHTS* (both 1997), the *BIG LEBOWSKI*, *CHICAGO CAB* and the remake

(or reshoot) of Alfred Hitchcock's *PSYCHO* (all 1998), director Gus Van Sant's bizarre shot-for-shot retelling of the horror classic that was quickly dismissed by the critics and the audience as pointless. "I had a great time," she enthused. "It was an experiment. I love Gus Van Sant and there was something about it that was just so crazy."

HANNIBAL, the long-awaited sequel to *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, promises to be Moore's most commercial release to date, next to *THE LOST WORLD*, of course. One thing that the actress did *not* do was a great deal of research into the fan mania that has grown around the Hannibal character over the years. "I didn't go on the net and look for anything like that," she said. "I read the book. I worked on the script. I talked to the FBI. That's the kind of stuff that I thought was important."

Over the gamut of her career, Moore has easily sequenced from spectacle to period drama and back again, and admits that she hasn't got a preference one way or the other. "I just respond to the characters and the writing," she said. "You just kind of pick your way through it. I wish I could say that I was sitting at home with a pile of 25 scripts that I loved in front of me, going, 'Do I do it? Do I not?' I'm pretty fortunate that I get work, but I also do what is compelling to me." □

Moore, in director Martin Campbell's 1991 TV horror film *CAST A DEADLY SPELL*, which came out the same year as *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, also did *PSYCHO* (1998).



HANNIBAL

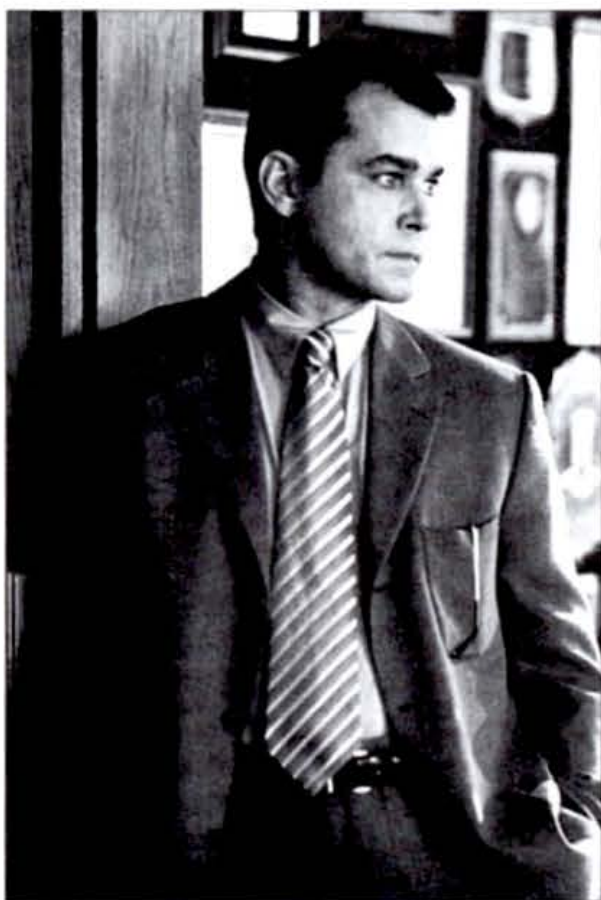
CAPTIVE AUDIENCE

Realizing the gruesome makeup efx.

In addition to HANNIBAL, Captive Audience Productions, headed up by makeup effects producer Keith VanderLaan, has recent credits for LITTLE NICKY and MONKEYBONE. Wes Wofford, key prosthetic makeup artist on HANNIBAL, notes the company has been doing a lot of silicone makeups for their last four movies.

"It's pretty new to the film industry," he said. "This film is another avenue to push that envelope a little further than where we've gone before." Brian Site, prosthetic makeup artist for the company, finds "You get a more life-like skin with silicone than with the old foam latex." The material was on display for the scaly blue skin of Mystique in X-MEN, prosthetics developed by another group, FX-SMITH (*Cinefantastique* 32:2, August, 2000). For HANNIBAL, though, the makeups had to be realistic, and Wofford noted one of the values of silicone is that it "just lets the director go. They can do anything they want; they're not inhibited by lighting restrictions: 'Oh, if you light it that way, it'll look fake.' You can stick makeups out in sunlight, and not flag them in any way, and it works; it reads exactly like skin."

One of the main projects in this film was the makeup and simulations for the key character Mason Verger (Gary Oldman), one of Lecter's victims, who had survived attack by dogs, and is now grossly disfigured and seeking revenge against Lecter. Asked to describe their work, Wofford said, "We're kind of limited in what we can say about it; MGM doesn't want us to disclose too much about what he looks like." Site adds that their challenge



Ray Liotta as FBI Agent Krendler, or is it his life-like double by Captive Audience, on which Hannibal dines while he's still alive?

was to make the appearance something unique and fresh, in the face of so many previous horror movie makeups. Wofford noted they went through about 25 designs before nailing it. "We sculpted and re-sculpted and re-sculpted, and had about five artists doing things, and Ridley [Scott] looking at them and giving his input."

Their work for HANNIBAL included a number of silicone bodies and heads, not only Verger, but also other victims. "We had some animatronic heads, human puppets all made out of the same silicone," Wofford reported.

But no demons, like they did for BLESS THE CHILD. "That film had a lot of non-reality based things," Wofford notes. "You can look at it and say, 'Yeah, that's a cool demon' or not. But HANNIBAL was pushing the reality envelope. When you're doing reality work, it's like, 'Yes, that looks exactly like the actor;' hopefully, you'll never even say it

looks like a puppet. The whole film was reality-based, under the incredible scrutiny of Ridley Scott, with his closeups. And there was the technical aspect of Verger, trying to do the disfigured thing so Gary Oldman could come through it and not be covered up too much. He still has to look deformed. When you cut the face off, and subtract it, that's always a challenge. How do you build up on someone's face and not make it look like a zombie mask, with sunken eyes?"

Wofford said the makeup was very uncomfortable for Oldman to wear. "We had a lot of pieces underneath the appliances that would kind of distort his face around, and do things to him that weren't particularly comfortable." But, he noted, it wasn't like the full body makeup for Mystique in X-MEN. "With Gary, it was just face and head and neck. Still, it was about four hours, then we'd shoot for ten hours. He was a trouper, he was amazing, putting up with the level of discomfort that he had to, to make the character work, and the makeup work." Wofford and Site both think this will be a high-profile credit for Captive Audience, a "feather in their cap" and they noted "Our product is not an after-thought, added on, but is rather a major part of the film."

One of the "versions" of the character FBI agent Krendler is a puppet made by Captive Audience, and the actor playing Krendler, Ray Liotta, said, "The creators are amazing. They've been working on it for three months and it's just an art form. I mean, I hope they don't do too good a job because it might take over for actors."

Douglas Eby

"When I read the script I thought, 'Whoa, this is sick,' said actor Ray Liotta, 'because you can't really visualize it, but the things Krendler does are funny.'"

chopped liver in terms of the writers. When I read the script I said, 'Whoa, this is sick,' because you can't really visualize it, but the things Krendler does are funny." He further described his character as someone who "works for the Justice Department and has some power over Starling and FBI people enough so that he can make her life miserable. I plant evidence on her to screw up the investigation and her. A lot of people end up dead in the beginning of the movie and it wasn't really her fault. I use her as the scapegoat and that kind of sets the ball in motion. They realize that in order to draw Hannibal out, they have to put her under a lot more distress and that's where I come in. I do the dirty deeds that I'm supposed to do, and Hannibal sees me on television and realizes I've been the person that really has been giving Clarice a hard time."

He added a comment about one of the more controversial scenes: "When I go to my summer house, thinking to have just a nice Fourth of July weekend, [Lecter] shows up and eats my brain. You can't really prepare for a scene like that. It's total imagination. There was a neurosurgeon there and he was telling us how there are brain operations that are done while you're awake. In the end, you just really trust Ridley. You work with a great director where you really feel like you could just fall back and whatever you do, you know you're in good hands, so it's really comforting." Liotta said he didn't know if Hopkins was "made for the role" of Lecter, "but he certainly made it his own. I think bad guys intrigue people. And this is the ultimate in bad guys. I mean, Hannibal goes to extremes." □

RIDLEY SCOTT

The director on adapting the Thomas Harris novel.

By Douglas Eby

One of the qualities of *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS* that made it so appealing was the richness of its key figures such as Clarice Starling. Ridley Scott assured the new film keeps the character of the FBI agent "firmly intact."

But the characters have not been an exclusive focus. "No, I think never," he says, "because one of the things that attracts us all to any material is the material itself. The thing that attracted me first was the book. And then, through a good book, I managed to persuade a really good writer, probably one of the best, Steve Zaillian, to do one of the best screenplays I've ever read. So this, so far, has been a rather good experience. The problem with the book, or any book, is distilling long form into shorter form: the book of 600 pages into a 110-120 page script. You go through a very selective process with that, a very sensitive process, as to how to sustain the quality of the characters and the story, and somehow at the same time, pitch out 400 pages. That's one of the big challenges, and I think we've managed to do that." He added, "The hardest thing is to get the script right. Once you get that script right, everything is relatively straightforward."

Asked about the ending of the book, including Starling's participation in cannibalism, Scott said, "One of the tricks and talents of adaptation, I think, is to somehow capture the spirit of the book, the story. And

sometimes you can't be as specific as the original material, or sometimes you don't want to be. But at the same time, particularly with a strong author like Tom Harris, you want to behave in as respectful a fashion as possible to the original material. Without telling you what the ending is, I can't really give you an answer," he added with a laugh.

A central character is a victim of Lecter, Mason Verger, now seeking revenge. Scott thinks one of the things that makes the story interesting is its theme of retribution. "Only the bad guys get it," he noted. "Only those who ask for it; only, as Hannibal puts it, the 'free-range rude,' get retribution. So those who find their own comeuppance, certainly deserve it." Scott noted the back story about Lecter was included to some extent in the film, "but it comes from the lips of Mason Verger, and he's not ashamed, as he said, because he's paid the price, and feels very comfortable talking to Clarice about



Scott directs Anthony Hopkins as Hannibal Lecter, epicure in retirement, on location in Florence. "The hardest part is to get the script right," noted Scott.

what happened and why. So we understand who he was then, and how it came to pass. Actually, not even by the hand of Hannibal, but in fact by his own hand, he damaged himself." That damage came from a dog attack on Verger, but, Scott said, Lecter "was just standing there as a witness to what was happening, and was actually having a rather good glass of red wine at the time."

For all his films, Scott noted, he is "totally involved" in the casting. He had wanted to work with Gary Oldman for a long time, and chose him to play Verger, one reason being Oldman's willingness to be covered with prosthetics.

"In Gary's case, he's a good enough, and confident enough, actor to have some creative fun with the whole process, and he was really brilliant. You need a

strong actor to come through makeup, and he certainly does."

Verger's plot of retribution against Lecter involves "specially trained killer hogs" and Scott said he "got hold of some beauties. Actually became quite friendly with them. They were beautiful hogs we found up in Canada, that had escaped the butcher shop, and that's why they were so large. This guy was basically keeping them as pets. From ground to hump they were about 40 inches; quite big, as much as five hundred pounds."

Referring again to the ending of the film, Scott said, "I think it may be rather an emotional resolution. And it seems to be correct, the way we've gone. It just seems to fall into place. But the outcome, in a strange way, is rather satisfying and emotional at the same time. I think Tom [Harris] will be happy." Scott affirmed the author had an active role in developing the script: "Actually, he sat with Steve [Zaillian] and I for five days, and it was great fun. We were trying to dip into what he may have edited out of his own book. So we went into his past development of the book, finding some different little bits and pieces and anecdotes to build up areas that we needed, which we found sometimes to be problematical. To have the author involved was great, and I think he enjoyed it." □

Hopkins tracks Starling's downward career spiral while hiding out in Florence. Noted Scott, "One of the tricks and talents of adaptation is capturing the spirit of the book."



OSMOSIS JONES

A sneak peek at Warner Bros ambitiously imaginative animation live-action combo.

By Eric Lurio

Welcome to the City of Frank, a bustling metropolis with a population in the billions. But you won't find it on any map, Frank isn't a city in the traditional sense, because on the outside he's just a single human being, a guy like anyone else. On the inside, however, he's a community of highly specialized single cells, working together for the benefit of the community, just like everyone else. Now imagine if each of these cells each had a personality of its own...

The concept isn't exactly new. Woody Allen did it decades ago in his *EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SEX BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK*. But the idea of little people inside one's body making its machinery work has always been a cute one, the question was how to do

it. The answer is one that is actually pretty simple. An anthropomorphic cartoon. So Warner Bros. Feature animation and the Farrelly brothers bring us *OSMOSIS JONES*, a tale of the human body's never-ending battle against disease.

The idea was first broached to studio management by Mark Heiman, and for the next year or so was one of three projects stuck in development hell waiting to find out which would be Warner Bros. follow-up to *THE IRON GIANT*. Originally, the next film the WB was going to release was *THE ZOO*, a "funny animal version of *THE GREAT ESCAPE*," but then Aardman animation and Dreamworks announced *CHICKEN RUN*, and Disney the still-in-limbo *THE BIG BREAK*, which had very similar plots, *THE ZOO* was shelved.

So, it was *OSMOSIS* or a version of Jack Kirby's *THE*

NEW GODS. Piet Kroon, head of the OJ development team and director of the award-winning short *T.R.A.N.S.I.T.*, had an advantage. While there had been several superhero movies in the last few years, nothing remotely like OJ had been done since Woody Allen a quarter century before. When *IRON GIANT* failed to do what it should have at the boxoffice, the people at Warners animation decided to get behind the more original idea as a last chance for their feature department, as another financial flop would be the death of them.

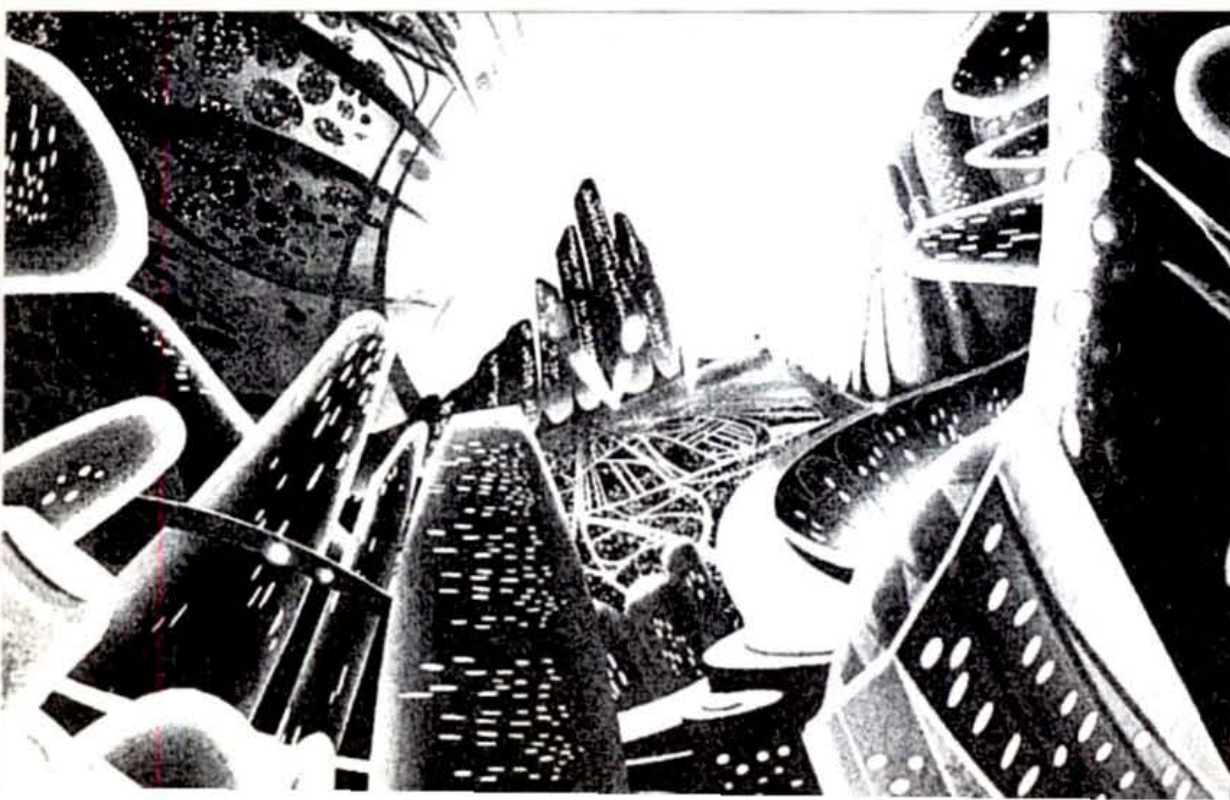
Enter Tom Sito, a story man for Disney during its second glory days of the late 1980s and early '90s, who had been a founder of Dreamworks' animation story department. Dreamworks' third traditionally animated feature, *SPIRIT: STALLION OF THE CIMMERON*, was supposed to be a serious

drama, and Sito, who considers himself a "comedian with a pencil" asked to be let out of his contract. This was granted and faster than you can say streptococcus, he was given a job as a co-director on the OJ project.

But the project wasn't "green-lighted" yet. So Kroon and Sito brought in Ben Stein to play a live action doctor, and a two minute trailer containing a minute and a half of animation was made. That did it. Warner Bros. co-chiefs Bob Daly and Terry Semel gave the go-ahead. Several months later, Heiman successfully convinced Bobby and Peter Farrelly to direct the live action sequences.

Frank DeTorrie (Bill Murray) is a single father living somewhere in New England. One day during his lunch break, he drops some food on the grass. A thorough slob, our hero picks it up off the ground, and without cleaning it off, pops it

The City of Frank (l) and Osmosis (r), in danger of ejection in a snot drip from Frank (Bill Murray), an out-of-shape steelworker infected by Thrax, a killer virus.





Osmosis Jones (Chris Rock), an over-eager white blood cell on the Immunity Force and his new partner Drix (David Hyde Pierce), a by-the-book cold pill, in the office of the Mayor (William Shatner), animation co-directed by Tom Sito.

in his mouth. On the morsel is Thrax (Voice of Laurence Fishburne), a deadly virus. As it goes down the esophagus, our perspective changes from that of the full-sized world of Frank and his friends, to the animated microscopic world of his guts. From here on out, or rather *in*, we're in the to the City of Frank, a bustling metropolis with a population in the billions...

The film goes back and forth

between the outside world of Frank as human being and the inside world of Frank as city. Each effects the other, as Frank gets sicker over the course of 24 hours, the immune system, led by the Chief (Joel Silver), a gruff police captain, tries to battle the evil Thrax and his minions. The situation is serious, so he brings in his best ma...cell, a tiny blue hero named Osmosis Jones (Chris Rock), who's as cool as they

See World Tours approaches the iris, with a spin-off TV show also in the works.



GERM WARFARE

“Warner Bros feature animation and the Farrelly Bros bring us a tale of the human body’s never-ending battle against disease. Imagine if each of our cells had a personality all its own.”

come, a bit of a rebel, and deadly efficient. Ozzie, as he’s called, has friends in high places. His girlfriend Leah (Brandy Norwood) is the Mayor’s (William Shatner) secretary. Is this Mayor the soul or the id? My sources won’t tell me, but they did say that he’s much like Frank, lazy and stupid. However, Ozzie does get him to find reinforcements, and this is the most blatant act of product placement in the history of cinema. Frank takes a couple of Drixoral® cold pills, and these turn into Ozzie’s new partner Drix (David Hyde Pierce), a by-the-book kind of guy, and except for their dedication to the task at hand, Ozzie’s exact opposite.

As one person close to the production told this reporter “This couldn’t have been done live action.”

“Our plates are pretty full, but it’s the best script I’ve seen my whole time in the business,” said Peter Farrelly to the people at *Entertainment Weekly*. Which is a bit disingenuous, as he and brother Bobby changed the live action section of it quite a bit, or so say some sources who don’t wish to be named. The live action portion of the film, which started out to be simple and brief, has been expanded, a task which had to be done very carefully, as the animated part of the film had already proceeded well into production, and changes would have been prohibitively expensive. The Farrellys and the cast, which includes Murray, Molly Shannon as his daughter and Chris Elliott as his best friend, went to Plymouth, Massachusetts, thereby giving up on a chance to have Frank wind up on the set of *ER*, where they shot for a couple of weeks to do a total of anywhere between 20 and 40 minutes of screen time.

The outside/inside dichoto-

my is something that, if done right, and considering who’s making this, there can be little doubt that it will be, could be as wildly original as anything that’s come out in the medium since *ROGER RABBIT* 13 and a half years before. Warners’ is very high on this project, otherwise they wouldn’t have announced the production of the spin-off TV show. □

Leah (Brandy Norwood), Ozzie’s girl and the Mayor’s secretary. Bobby and Peter Farrelly direct the live action.





Hobo Massimo Sarchielli gets a pen through the head from Argento's mysterious black-gloved killer in *I CAN'T SLEEP*. Below: Death on a train, Conchita Puglisi as Amanda, the second of three opening murders. Right: Stefano Dionisi and Chiara Caselli cower as Roberto Zibetti discovers the body of Gabriele Lavia. Argento's "giallo" horror opens in January in Italy.



DARIO ARGENTO

The Italian maestro of

By Alan Jones

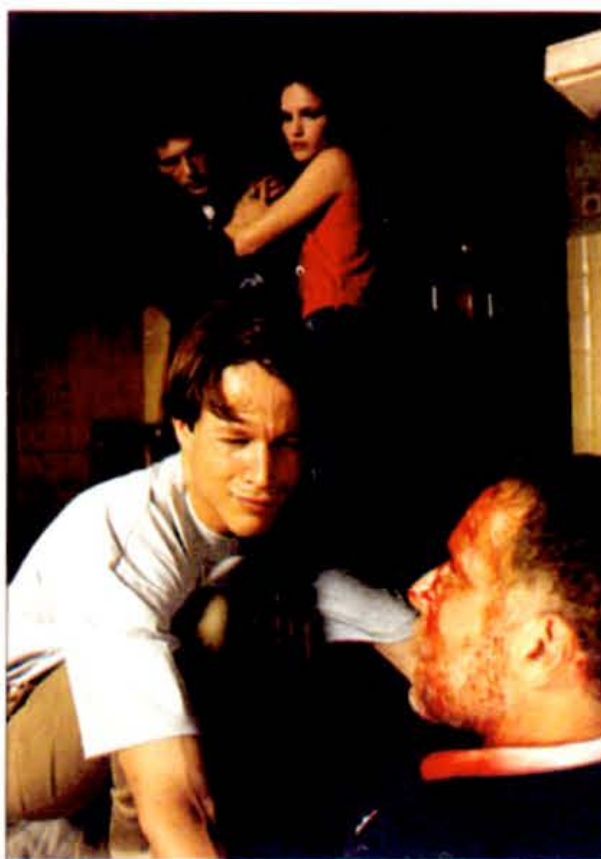
"They'll never find me...All these years I've gotten away with it...They don't know I'm a bad boy..."

With this line of dialogue, so begins the latest horror thriller by Dario Argento, the maestro of that quintessentially Italian art form—the Giallo picture—which he has famously made well and truly his own. *NON HO SONNO* (the literal English translation is *I CAN'T SLEEP*) finds Argento going back to the

many fans at festivals and in my Roman shop 'Profondo Rosso' and they all say one of two things. It's either, 'Please complete the *SUSPIRIA* trilogy,' or 'Please can you make another movie like *DEEP RED*.' This has been going on for years and I've been adamantly opposed to doing either. My life and career is my own adventure. I've resisted those easy options because I've followed my own path no matter where it has led. I want to do what I want when I want to do it, not be dictated to

by audiences. I've been lucky enough to have had the luxury of being able to make the picture I've wanted to make each time on my own terms and without compromise. I know that's rare in the film business and I've emphatically embraced that freedom because it is such a unique commodity."

He added, "I know people haven't liked my recent work but that's their problem. It's important to discover new things and explore different avenues. I haven't wanted to rest on my laurels. Lately I've been at a point in my life where I wanted to pay my



genre roots he successfully explored in his first four hit movies, *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*, *CAT O'NINE TAILS*, *FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET* and *DEEP RED*, and many themes from each of those are echoed in the tightly constructed script written by Argento, his long-time collaborator and best friend Franco Ferrini (co-writer of *CREEPERS*, *OPERA*, *TWO EVIL EYES* and *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME*) and best-selling Giallo novelist Carlo Lucarelli

respects to the artists who have made an impact on me. I made *TWO EVIL EYES* as an homage to Edgar Allan Poe because I read his stories when I was a child and they provided me with such inspiration. I remade *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* because the 1943 classic was one of the first films I ever saw, and it made a huge impression. My last three movies were with my daughter Asia and form a trilogy on their own weird merits. Through working with Asia I learned a lot about myself and I wouldn't

ARGENTO'S GIALLO HORROR

gore on returning to his slasher movie roots.

thing."

But now Argento feels ready to come full circle as he explained, "I went through a phase where I thought nostalgia was a bad thing. It irritated me that my fans kept wanting me to retread old ground. Then I realized my early work did have something special that audiences adored apart from what I humbly thought about them. They occupy a distinguished niche in Italian film history and probably always will. So, I thought, let's wipe the slate clean and see where I can take my speciality for contemporary urban thrillers today. I got so excited by the prospect that I've already signed a deal with Cecchi Gori Films in Italy to make two other Giallo pictures after *I CAN'T SLEEP*. Together they will form a new trilogy, like my first 'Animal' one."

However, *I CAN'T SLEEP* is being produced by Medusa Film, the Italian distribution company responsible for backing Argento's recent releases. They agreed to finance his latest project based on the better than average boxoffice returns for *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* in Italy and other key European territories. Shot over nine weeks on location in Turin throughout early Summer 2000, *I CAN'T SLEEP* stars Max Von Sydow, Stefano Dionisi, Chiara Caselli, Rossella Falk, Paolo Maria Scalondro and Gabriele Lavia. It tells the story of widowed detective Ulisse Moretti (Von Sydow) pulled out of lonely retirement to help police investigate a new batch of crimes bearing the hallmarks of a serial killer he thought he'd closed the book on two decades earlier. Moretti has always been haunted by the fact that he might have blamed the wrong person but, because the

"I know people haven't like my most recent work," said Argento, "but that's their problem. It's important to discover new things and explore different avenues."



Argento rigs an effects double for actress Francesca Bettori, who plays Stephen Dionisi's mother, the first flashback victim of the brutal serial killer.

murders ceased after the final novel homicide, all based on a nursery rhyme from a yellowing children's storybook titled 'Death Farm,' everyone assumed he had cracked the case and got the maniac's identity right.

Another person is haunted by the vicious murders too—the grown-up son of the last victim under Moretti's criminal duty. With a history of alcohol abuse behind him, Giacomo (Dionisi) still can't exorcise the image of his mother's tortured body orally violated by a musical instrument, and he contacts Moretti offering his help in finally bringing the unknown deranged psychopath to justice. When the detective found the young Giacomo cradling his mother's

body, Moretti promised him he would not rest until he apprehended the unhinged perpetrator responsible. But as the new murders intensify, and further clues prove even more perplexing, the murderer's devious actions have a devastating impact on both Moretti and Giacomo's precariously fragile psyches and lives.

I CAN'T SLEEP begins with three bloody murders in a row in an escalating crescendo of terror very similar to the opening of *SUSPIRIA*. It ends with one of the main characters dying. There's a revealing flashback sequence contained in the credits like *DEEP RED*. One pivotal clue also evokes another memory of *DEEP RED*. Remember the fleeting mirror im-

age reflection of Clara Calamai? Audiences will have to be just as eagle-eyed to spot a matching device inspired by Argento's admiration of the beloved children's classic *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. The major clue though revolves around an unusual sound effect as in *THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE*. The latter is one of the most clever subterfuges in the Argento canon to date and is underlined in his script as being of vital importance to the overall success of the completed film.

"It is a good idea, isn't it?" Argento remarked about this poser. "I think this script is one of the best I've ever come up with but, unusually, I didn't have a specific story or concept in mind when I began thinking about making a new movie in my classic tradition. Although I do keep discarded ideas and possible character sketches in note form dating back years, and often refer to them to give me inspiration, *I CAN'T SLEEP* was like a jump in an ice cold lake. Perhaps the story came easily because I'm so rooted in the Giallo genre and feel completely comfortable working within it. It was an easy story to formulate once I'd got going and my first thought was to further explore a relationship dynamic I touched on in *CAT O'NINE TAILS*."

In that film, Karl Malden played a blind old newspaperman who teamed up with young reporter James Franciscus, to solve the murderous mysteries surrounding a genetic research institute. He continued, "Moretti hasn't lost his eyesight in *I CAN'T SLEEP*, just his self respect, his dignity and parts of his memory. I originally thought of having him suffer from Alzheimer's Disease, but

figured that might be pushing believability too far. When the murders start again, he comes back to life almost. It regenerates him and gives him a reason to live. He becomes young again. Likewise, Giacomo is in a depressed state. He found his father with another woman, his mother is killed and he escaped into alcoholism. When he helps Moretti, he finds a father figure and each gives the other what they've missed for so long. I found the contrast between the two characters very fertile ground for story stimulation. I added my beloved animal motifs, a puppet like the one in *DEEP RED*, prostitutes getting slashed to ribbons, a dwarf subplot and the first draft script emerged in terrific shape."

But what turned Argento and Ferrini's initial screenplay into the intricate puzzler it finally became was the contribution of Carlo Lucarelli, the top Giallo author in Italy today and currently riding high on the Italian best-seller list with his latest Spanish-set novel *Guernica*. Argento said, "Carlo knows all about contemporary police methods and the latest technology they use, because he's done masses of research for his own books and he added that brand of truthfulness into the screenplay. The police procedural scenes are all his work and are wonderful. He's a real star. He

Menaced on a train, Barbara Lerici as the third of three opening victims, a tour de force of carnage at the outset.



"My mother always complained about me leaving the lights on," said Argento. "...I think I kill more women in my films because I viewed her as some sort of monster."



Elena Marchesini as a disco victim. The director pegs his penchant for killing women on his mother, who made him turn out the lights when he was scared.

didn't want any money, he just said that the experience of working with me would be enough. His credit on the film will be 'With the collaboration of' at his own insistence."

ICAN'T SLEEP is the fourth movie Argento has shot in Turin. The city is where Argento fans the world over arrive at the airport, jump into a taxi, and ask to be taken to the main piazza in the Via Roma where he filmed clairvoyant Macha Meril's window death scene in *DEEP RED*. Cab drivers are so used to this occurrence that the square is now considered a top tourist spot. At any time of the day or night, people arrive, walk to the statue fountain, immediately turn around to get their bearings and locate the actual window used. A bit further down the road is the villa where Mimsy Farmer and Michael Brandon lived in *FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET*. Argento said, "I love working in Turin as the city has a peculiar atmosphere. The buildings are so severe and you run into something strange every time you turn a corner. Turin is also the home of Italian

black magic. More Satanists live in Turin than in any other city. Quite why that is I have no idea but you do get an unusual feeling from the place."

The murderer's lair in *I CAN'T SLEEP* is named in the script as the Villa De Fabritiis and is a combination of two locations. For the interiors, Argento chose a run-down house in the Via Principe Tommaso close to the late-night bar area nicknamed Murazzi (Bad Wall) by the banks of the Po river. The baroque and crumbling house is famous for being home to the eccentric inventor of the X-Ray and once Argento had finished shooting there, the Miramax production *HEAVEN* (starring Cate Blanchett and directed by *RUN LOLA RUN*'s Tom Tykwer) moved in. The exteriors of the house were shot a mile away in the Via di Villa Quiete and were used mainly for a sequence where Moretti and Giacomo find a gap in the outside bushes and break into the building.

"The locations are very striking," remarked director of photography Ronnie Taylor. "The visual interest this film will have will be second to none."

It's the third Argento film for *GHANDI* Oscar-winner Taylor after *OPERA* and *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*. "I read the script with trepidation," said Taylor, "but I have to say I thought it was one of his better ones. It wasn't as lazily constructed as before. Max Von Sydow being in the cast was a major draw, too, as the acting in Dario's films is often the weakest link. I knew that wouldn't be the case with such a respected artist as Max. Although I have had misgivings about the completed films in the past, I genuinely like working with Dario."

"The atmosphere on his sets is always good humored and, whereas I thought he was wasting his talents in arbitrary ways the last time around, I sense a new maturity in his work here that's made me glad I decided to become a part of his family team once more."

Rather than locking Taylor down to a specific look as he did in *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA*, which was all based on the work of French painter Georges de la Tour, Argento has given his cinematographer free range on *I CAN'T SLEEP*. He continued, "I've really done my own thing this time. I've taken on board the fact that it's in his best Giallo tradition and I've layered on dark, brooding and moody shots with loads of shadows. I'm purposely keeping the lighting gloomy—opaque even—not so you can't see anything clearly, but to heighten the mystery."

He added, "I'm very proud of the opening 15 minutes which is a catalogue of gory murders. One of the first victims is a prostitute who gets killed on a train at night. That was a huge lighting number because we had to keep the train moving and have it pull into a station where the secondary action—the girl's best friend listening to her frightened voice on a mobile phone—took place. She then searches the carriages in mounting terror. It's a meaty opening that will really put audiences on the edge of their seats. Like *SUSPIRIA*, the opening is drenched in rain and we had masses of big water pipes dotted all over the place. Throughout it all, Dario got carried away with crazy angles and

GIALLO HORROR

MAX VON SYDOW

The Ingmar Bergman vet and EXORCIST star on taking a stab at Argento's Italian brand of slasher.

By Alan Jones

Dario Argento wrote *I CAN'T SLEEP* with two actors in mind to play the central role of Ulisse Moretti. One was veteran actor/director Richard Attenborough whom he figured might take the offer seriously thanks to his personal connection with his director of photography Ronnie Taylor, who lit *GHANDI* and *A CHORUS LINE*. His other choice was Max Von Sydow, the imposing Swedish icon of numerous Ingmar Bergman melancholic morality dramas including *THE SEVENTH SEAL* and *THE VIRGIN SPRING*.

Born Carl Adolf Von Sydow in Lund, 1929, the classically trained actor was virtually unknown to international audiences until he played the role of Jesus Christ in the biblical epic *THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD*. But the role he is still most remembered for is that of Father Merrin in *THE EXORCIST*. Von Sydow said, "In many ways I can't believe I'm mostly still recognized because of that film. It has a good side to it because the simple fact is it's important for an actor's career to be recognized and noticed. At the same time, it's disturbing that you can't retain your privacy. I'm a very private person and want to keep it that way. But that's all part of the motion picture business I suppose. Luckily I'm proud of *THE EXORCIST* and still think it's a great film."

Von Sydow has appeared in subsequent genre pictures like *DREAMSCAPE*, *DUNE*, *NEEDFUL THINGS*, *JUDGE DREDD* and *WHAT DREAMS MAY COME*. However, his favorite movie ever is still *PELLE THE CONQUEROR*, director Bille August's critically acclaimed life-affirming drama featuring his towering performance as a slave-driven cowherd. He hand picks his film projects—"I do have to work from time to time for financial reasons"—and turns down more quality scripts in one month than many actors get in a lifetime.

So why is he in Turin making a Dario Argento picture? "The *I CAN'T SLEEP* script arrived and I was strangely caught by



Von Sydow as Ulisse Moretti in Argento's *I CAN'T SLEEP*, a lonely detective pulled out of retirement to investigate a serial killer he thought he'd caught decades earlier.

it. I had seen a couple of Argento films but can't honestly say I was familiar with his oeuvre or the genre tradition it follows. I actually thought it was funny—it had a black comic streak running through it which greatly appealed to me. I didn't find it horrifying in the slightest—but then I was in *THE EXORCIST*!—and I do find it hard to take such subjects seriously. Yet the script was totally different and more interesting than anything I'd read for ages. Plus, I'd never done anything like it before, which was a major attraction. It must have been kismet because I had been thinking to myself how nice it would be to play an elderly detective—something akin to Agatha Christie's Miss Marple—and suddenly Dario's script turned up!"

About the character of Moretti, Von Sydow said, "He's hiding away from a world which is passing him by. He's virtual-

ly stopped living and cut off all communication with the outside world. He's given up on life almost, and is waiting to die. Suddenly he's given the chance to re-investigate something he was never sure he solved correctly, a case he always had nagging doubts about. Here's the opportunity he has been secretly waiting for to return to society and be useful again. Then he meets Giacomo who shares an even greater personal involvement with the crimes and they team up to work it out together. As the film progresses it becomes clear how much we need each other as we both start living vicariously through the other to differing degrees. The challenge is trying to make their mentor relationship believable, something audiences will accept and want to be interested in. Happily the chemistry between Stefano Dionisi and I is very good. We get on well, too, and that's half the battle."

Before working on *I CAN'T SLEEP*, Von Sydow insisted on making one change to the script. He explained, "I don't like soliloquies in movies. I can't speak out loud to myself and must always have something—a cat, a dog,—to talk to. I asked Dario to let my character own a pet parrot to converse with and he was more than happy to include it in the script. None of the violence bothered me because it's part of the aesthetic of Dario's work. His style encompasses such shocking images. I'm more amused by cinematic violence than scared."

He added, "I want to work with directors with whom I can communicate. I like to hear their ideas—just don't force them on me! I hate directors who keep all the initiative and merely order you about. That usually means they don't trust your instincts. On the other hand, Dario trusts you implicitly and is sensitive to your needs. He's intelligent, good company and has an unshakable psychological eye coupled with a strong personality. I've worked with directors who clearly don't know what they're doing but I felt in good hands with Dario from the moment we first met. A nice part in a good story and a fascinating director—you can't ask for more than that." □

fluid camerawork as he normally does. I didn't feel this way on either of the last films we made together, but I can honestly say *I CAN'T SLEEP* really is a proper horror thriller as far as my contribution goes."

Argento said, "The opening sequence is 15 minutes of pure blood-letting as the killer loves to have a warped sado-masochistic relationship with his victims. He's like a cat who's cornered a rat. I'm purposely trying to make the murders feel exasperating, like they're being done by a petulant child. The theme of childhood runs all through this picture because that's when the most psychological damage is done and there's a heartlessness about young children that is quite menacing. I used to scare myself when I was young by reading Poe stories, '1001 Arabian Nights' and fairy tales at night. I was often too frightened to go to the bathroom because it meant walking down a long dark passage. My mother would always complain about me leaving the lights switched on. I hated her for that and often think I tend to kill more women in my films because I viewed her as some sort of monster. The whole point of the Italian title is that it refers to a child whining to his parents about not being able to sleep unless a bedtime story is read out. The murders are all based on a nursery rhyme for that reason as the murderer reverts to those fond/harsh memories of being rocked to sleep by gruesome fairy tales and their deliciously scary after effect."

Written by Argento's actress/director daughter Asia, the complete nursery rhyme goes like this:

It's now midnight—and in my bed I toss and fight. This is how the war began with the beasts across the land. Morning at One—the Farmer has some little boy's fun. Piggy's throat he quickly slits in victory the battle quits. Morning at Two—the rooster's cock-a-doodle-doo. The instrument for this fine song makes the pleasure nice 'n long. Morning at Three—the Farmer strangles the chicken wee. Says he, 'Won't let me sleep' yet in his bed hears not a peep. Morning at Four—here's

"I've rediscovered the spirit of the camera," said Argento. "I CAN'T SLEEP goes back to extreme angles—echoing the anxious childish frenzy of the murderer's state of mind."



Stefano Dionisi as Giacomo, emotionally scarred from seeing his mother grotesquely violated by the killer years before, investigating the monster's lair.

kitty purring at the door. In the tub for an icy swim and drowning her just for a whim. Morning at Five—the little rabbit crushed alive. With rabbit's teeth she bit and fought but in the end it brought her naught. Morning at Six—now the long swan's neck he'll fix. When he cuts it from her head he knows that his last foe is dead. Now it's the break of day—the Farmer in his bed now lay. With all the weapons at his feet so he could finally go to sleep.

This nursery rhyme is the blueprint for every murder in *I CAN'T SLEEP*. For example, the kitty line is sublimated by the murderer when he drowns a disco dancer wearing a cat-suit in the nightclub's laundry room and leaves a paper cut-out cat's face at the scene of the crime. Shot at a rococo hospital on the outskirts of Turin, this murder scene sees Argento's camera in full peripatetic motion. There isn't an inch of the set Argento doesn't cover in the sequence and that includes the ceiling. Argento continued, "Along with the mechanics of the Giallo, I've also rediscovered the spirit of the camera. *I CAN'T SLEEP* goes back to extreme angles,

fast-moving dolly shots, impossible acrobatics and radical editing because it echoes the anxious childish frenzy of the murderer's state of mind."

For Argento, there was no other actor he wanted to play Giacomo than Stefano Dionisi who shot to international stardom playing the castrato opera singer in *FARINELLI*. He had asked Dionisi to appear in *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME* but the actor was suddenly hospitalized for eight months at the time and regretfully had to decline. Dionisi said, "Dario and I have been friends for six years mainly through Asia because she liked my work. It was unfortunate I couldn't do *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME* but earlier this year I called him up—he was with John Carpenter at an Italian film festival—and told him I was feeling really well and would love us to work together. A few months later, he called back and asked me to play Giacomo."

The offer to appear in *I CAN'T SLEEP* came at exactly the same time he was asked by director Pupi Avati to play one of the knights in his medieval fantasy *KNIGHTS OF THE*

QUEST. He continued, "I'd worked with Pupi before in *THE ARCAN E ENCHANTER* so I turned that down for the experience of working for Dario. Strangely, my character in *THE ARCAN E ENCHANTER* was also named Giacomo! Both films meant acting in English so it wasn't as if I took the easiest option. Quite the reverse actually because it has turned out be a tough assignment acting, speaking an alien language and trying to hold my own against Max Von Sydow. He's tireless and has helped my performance enormously. The nurturing relationship we have on screen has been reflected off it too. Three weeks into the shoot and I'm completely relaxed and comfortable about the way the film is progressing."

Dionisi isn't the greatest admirer of the Giallo form in general, but he did love the *I CAN'T SLEEP* script. He said, "The story was so believable in a way I find most thrillers incapable of being. The murderer's identity really took me aback too! It's also strange for me to be surrounded by mutilation and severed heads rather than romance and action. How does Dario sleep at night with an imagination like he has? Like *FARINELLI*, this film will be seen all over the world because of Dario's reputation and it can only help my career. Dario hates prima donnas so I've been very careful not to ask too many questions about motivation and things like that. But if he trusts in your instincts, he let's you do what you want as long as you remain calm about it and it fits in with the overall atmosphere he's trying to convey."

He added, "There's a lot for an actor to work with in the Giacomo part as the death of his mother still plagues him. He blames himself for it in many ways because he couldn't do anything about it. Every single day he feels guilty and fights for his dignity. In the course of his relationship with Moretti he learns to lose the guilt and love himself for having the strength to remove the obstacles from his life. My contribution to the script was accenting his guilt because it's so important and it's what makes Giacomo tick."

The one problem Argento

thought Dionisi would have with the film was the actress he cast in the role of Gloria, Giacomo's love interest. Chiara Caselli and Dionisi were once a hot tabloid item in Italy because of an explosive romance. Dionisi laughed, "I found it funny that Dario was so concerned over that. He asked me if I was in a quandary with Chiara playing my girlfriend and, of course, the answer was no. We're both professionals and we've already made three other movies together. I found his concern quite touching. Our personal relationship quickly went from being girlfriend and boyfriend to sister and brother. She's like a part of my family now. Why would I object to having a fantastic actress playing my soul mate?"



Rosella Falk falls victim in *I CAN'T SLEEP*, written by Argento with his long-time collaborator Franco Ferrini and best-selling Italian Giallo novelist Carlo Lucarelli, echoing many of the themes from his early horror film hits like *DEEP RED*.

I CAN'T SLEEP may be a throwback to Argento's Giallo past, but one important factor common to those early works will be missing in his latest redefinition of the structure. Soundtrack maestro Ennio Morricone has been replaced by Goran Bregovich in Argento's musical affections. Argento met the Serbian composer, famous for his work with the former Yugoslavian director Emir (UNDERGROUND/BLACK CAT WHITE CAT) Kusturica, at a music festival. Argento said, "We stayed in each other's company for four

days and got on extremely well. He was moaning about how he's never scored a thriller and he had so many interesting ideas suggesting strong masculine music with ethnic undertones that I thought experimenting with his themes would be very interesting. Morricone always wrote victim music to my mind and Goblin seemed always to be on the villain's side. Something in between was intriguing and another slate to wipe clean."

Quite what the English title

of *NON HO SONNO* will be once it enters international distribution after its January 2001 Rome premiere is still under heated debate. The Italian title was chosen because it contains an interior rhyme echoing the motifs in the screenplay. Argento sighed, "We thought about using *INSOMNIA*, which isn't quite the correct condition of the murderer's psyche, but Stephen King owns the title. Then *INSOMNIAC* was suggested along with *DEATH FARM*, the mythical book the

nursery rhyme comes from (by the way, the book is my Hitchcock MacGuffin because you never do get to see the last page which is supposedly of vital importance), and also the rhyme's first line *IT'S NOW MID-NIGHT*. We'll have to see."

Producer Claudio Argento couldn't be happier that his older brother is back making the type of film they both scored great success with in the Seventies. He said, "Look at Dario. He's smiling, he's happy, he's back making his kind of Giallo his way. It has been exciting to be back in Turin after all these years and the bonus is our professional working relationship is the best it has ever been. I was completely struck by the script which is complicated, marvelously mysterious and a real shocker.

"Audiences the world over want what Dario does best and I'm thrilled to be back in the position of helping him achieve his aim to push the boundaries of the Giallo blueprint. I've always had a problem with critics who call Dario a horror director as I feel what he does is unclassifiable. No one can make a Dario Argento picture like the man himself and that's why his work has endured to captivate new audiences. He remains ahead of his time and encapsulates all that is truly great about Italian genre cinema."

Argento's killer strikes! Having resisted for years fans who requested he return to the nostalgia of his early successes, Argento has become energized by his return to form and his signed with Cechi Gori Films for two more Giallo horrors.



WES CRAVEN PRESENTS DRACULA 2000

Miramamax's Dimension horror label begins to dip into the classics, roll over Bram Stoker.

By David Rome

Lafayette Cemetery looks like the set of a Hammer horror film. An eerie mist crawls across the ground, creeping around and between the tombs. You get a strange feeling that Christopher Lee might be lurking nearby. Tonight this world-famous cemetery, nestled in the Garden District of New Orleans, is the setting for WES CRAVEN PRESENTS DRACULA 2000. Director Patrick Lussier, writer/producer Joel Soisson, producer W. K. Border, and executive producers Wes Craven and Marianne Maddalena have teamed-up to bring Dracula into the 21st century. Dimension Films opens the horror update nationwide December 22.

Tonight is day 46 of the 53-day shooting schedule. Or, is that night 46? It is a vampire movie after all. DRACULA 2000 began filming in Toronto in early June, then moved to New Orleans for two weeks of location filming.

Director Patrick Lussier runs back and forth through the mist from the camera to the monitors. He is very energetic, his words coming quickly like his thoughts. You get the sense when he speaks that this man is very passionate about his work. He made his directorial debut with PROPHECY III: THE ASCENT. DRACULA 2000 is only his second film, but you wouldn't know it by watching him work. He has the perfect balance of control and a relaxed tone that makes a great director. Before becoming a director, Lussier was an editor. His professional association with horror-meister Wes Craven began when Lussier was editing Craven's television series, NIGHTMARE CAFÉ. Craven asked him to cut WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE, and he's been Craven's protégé ever since, editing all of his subsequent films.



Christopher Plummer stars as Abraham Van Helsing, now a vampire himself, kept alive by the blood of Dracula, in the horror adaptation only produced by Wes Craven.

Lussier knows that there have been about 70 Dracula movies made to date, making Dracula one of the most-filmed characters ever. He explains what he thinks makes the character so universally appealing: "He's the ultimate individual," said Lussier. "He answers to no one, his motivation is completely and utterly his own. He lives completely for himself, does whatever he wants. He's completely powerful, has sex with anybody he wants. If there's something he doesn't like, he destroys it."

Writer/producer Joel Soisson sits

calmly behind the monitors outside the cemetery walls, as Lussier continues to run back and forth. He is polite and witty, and speaks about his work with deep understanding. He seems like the kind of guy you'd want to hang out with—sort of the antithesis of the typical Hollywood producer. Soisson has written two other films released this year, HIGHLANDER: ENDGAME and MIMIC 2. His producing credits range from BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE to THE PROPHECY trilogy, to the documentary, TREKKIES.

I asked Soisson, why another Dracula movie? "I haven't the foggiest idea. Somebody should stop us," he joked. "It's a good question, being that there's been so many, and frankly, I didn't initially want to do it for that very obvious reason. Who needs another one? What else is there to say? For me, the real transforming moment was when Patrick came up with this new hook for the origin of Dracula. Suddenly, with that hook, everything that really amounts to a retelling of the Dracula story takes on a whole new relevance. Everything is laced with a brand-new backstory, and it energizes for me the whole myth exponentially. It suddenly becomes really, really fun again."

The producers were tossing around different storylines for keeping Dracula on ice for a hundred years when Lussier came up with the twist that made the whole story fall into place. "I was actually doing music editing on REINDEER GAMES while I was cutting SCREAM 3 and came up with [the twist] that just made complete utter perfect sense," said Lussier.

DRACULA 2000 begins where Bram Stoker's novel ends. In 1897 Abraham Van Helsing, played by Christopher Plummer (THE INSIDER), almost succeeds in killing



Jennifer Esposito as Solina, Van Helsing's aide, the catalyst who sets Dracula free, biting Jonny Lee Miller.

Dracula, played by Scottish actor Gerard Butler (ATTILA). Although he doesn't kill him, he does manage to capture him. Cut to the new millennium—Dracula has been imprisoned by Van Helsing for a little over a hundred years in a subterranean, high-tech security vault in London.

But how can Van Helsing still be alive a hundred years later? It seems that in the process of staking Dracula, Van Helsing is stabbed in the shoulder by one of the stakes that impales Dracula. "In essence, from that point onward, he [Van Helsing] is infected himself," Soisson explained. "[Now] he's basically a junkie who needs to keep that hunger in check. And the only way he can do that is by feeding off Dracula. He's not only keeping him locked up to protect society, but he's also keeping himself alive through the ensuing century, the notion being, if evil cannot be killed, is there a chance that it can maybe be contained forever? And obviously the answer is no."

Believing that Van Helsing is hiding something of tremendous value under lock and key, an ambitious gang of thieves, played by Omar Epps (JUICE, SCREAM 2), Lochlyn Munro (SCARY MOVIE, DEAD MAN ON CAMPUS), Danny Masterson (THE FACULTY, THAT '70s SHOW), Sean Patrick Thomas (COURAGE UNDER FIRE, CRUEL INTENTIONS) and Tig Fong (THE BIG HIT, THE CORRUPTER), breaches the high-security crypt and unwittingly sets Dracula free, unleashing his evil into the 21st century. Soisson noted that there is a little homage to "The Howling Man"—THE TWILIGHT ZONE episode in which Satan is unwittingly set free from a monastery. But Soisson

quickly points out, "[He] is not Satan, by the way. We may be inspired by other pieces of business, but we're not going that far. He's not the Devil. That's the only thing I'll say about who he is."

For Butler, the dashing Scottish actor who plays Dracula, the bloodsucker evokes a surprising comparison. "It's like THE TERMINATOR," said Butler of bringing Dracula into modern times. "You don't look at Schwarzenegger coming up and think, 'God, that looks strange.' Who would think about it, you know? He's just there. He's there to do a job. He's there with a purpose and it works brilliantly in this film."

So how did Butler get the role? "I auditioned for it. I went up for another part with the same casting director, and as I was walking out, she passed me the script and said, 'Have a look at this.' So I went in and read for it and it went very well, and then I was in the running," said Butler. "But it was a long casting process. They were looking at a lot of different people." It was executive producer Wes Craven who finally chose Butler for the role. The decision came only two days before filming began.

Craven (r) with director Patrick Lussier, his long-time editor, who came up with the surprise twist that makes the update work, opening nationally December 22.



“[Director] Patrick [Lussier] came up with this new hook for the origin of Dracula...It suddenly becomes really, really fun again.”

—Writer/producer Joel Soisson—

Solina, played by the lovely Jennifer Esposito (SUMMER OF SAM, SPIN CITY), is the catalyst who inadvertently (or deliberately?) sets Dracula free. It seems that she's not working for Van Helsing by coincidence. "You think she's after paintings and stuff, but I believe she knows something," Esposito said. "I think there's a lot of reasoning and a lot of planning that she's gone through, I think, for years."

Tonight, Mary, played by Justine Waddell (MANSFIELD PARK), is running through Lafayette Cemetery. She dashes through the mist chased only by the Steadicam operator at the moment. But Dracula isn't too far away—he's in the makeup trailer. Cinematographer Peter Pau (CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON and THE KILLER) directs his crew to reposition a light atop one of the cranes. Suddenly, the place looks even spookier.

Lussier describes the look of the film: "It's surreal, but it's kind of like super-real. It's very exaggerated moonlight, exaggerated colors, things that push the envelope especially with Dracula around." Lussier points out that many films that take place primarily at night appear very dark and underexposed. "[We] tried to do strange extremes at night, [to show] that kind of terror that night is, yet still being able to see around the edges." Production designer Carol Spier (BLESS THE CHILD, MIMIC) helped realize what Lussier calls, "a feeling of decay, the world that's kind of rotting around the edges, waiting for somebody to take it to a different place."

At about midnight, right before the crew breaks for lunch, Dracula has finally caught up with Mary in front of one of the crypts. Dressed in a long black coat, with red-rimmed eyes, Dracula delivers some profound dialogue that I'm too far away to hear. This particular corner of Lafayette Cemetery is dressed with at least half a dozen fake tombs—one bears the name "Tracy Hepburn." One will be broken, Dracula is going to dash across the tops of others.

It is a special connection to Mary that has brought Dracula to New Orleans in the first



The bookish Esposito, prior to her seduction by Dracula, "becoming a vampire was her absolute dream."

place. "Because [Van Helsing] has been infected by this blood, he has in essence transferred this blood to his daughter, much as you would a virus," Soisson revealed. "And this is an amazing revelation to Dracula when he discovers this, because he has now found someone who is born, and not bitten, which is very important to him in terms of culminating his own quest for a counterpart and equal. Someone to sort of dominate the next millennium with." Soisson explains that Van Helsing basically commits his life to finding the means to destroy Dracula, "because there's not only the world's survival at stake, there's something more personal, and that has to do with his daughter [Mary]."

But Dracula isn't so easy to destroy. In fact, he cannot be killed. "Every act that kills another vampire—beheading, sun, ripping the heart out, stakes, silver—they are annoyances, but they are not lethal," Soisson explained. "And there's a reason. So he's kind of the Adam, the patient zero of all vampires, and his inception is ultimately what creates this invincibility. He is essentially a guy that not only won't die, he can't die." Does this Dracula really want to live forever? Bela Lugosi's Dracula envied the dead. "That's the subtext that we're playing all the way through this is the question, does he really want to die? And if you ask me, absolutely," Soisson said. "But do you get that out of the movie? Maybe. I'm not even sure myself yet. That's definitely something that the actor is playing under the surface. It doesn't present itself in his actions or his dialogue directly, but he definitely hints at it."

The fact that Dracula can't die poses a bit of a challenge to

the heroes who ultimately have to destroy him. Along for the ride is Van Helsing's young assistant, Simon, played by Jonny Lee Miller (*TRAINSPOTTING*, *HACKERS*), who comes to New Orleans in an attempt to save Mary from Dracula's spell. Simon and Van Helsing have more than the old wooden stake at their disposal. Soisson explains, "What Van Helsing has constructed is a gun that has numerous functions that could kill a vampire, from blades to silver spikes. It's this kind of da Vinci-inspired gizmo that he does all his major work with, and has throughout the years. The only problem is, it doesn't work on our main dude." Soisson explains that the key to destroying Dracula is understanding him. "Finding the origin allows you ultimately the chance at least to end this guy," he said.

What would a vampire movie be without vampires? Van Helsing's fancy gun comes in handy after all. In addition to some of those unfortunate thieves who meet an undead end, there are a few luscious vamps that prowl through the scenery—including Solina (Esposito), Lucy, played by Colleen

“[He] is not Satan. We’re inspired by other pieces of business, but we’re not going that far. He’s not the Devil. That’s the only thing I’ll say about who he is.”

—Writer/producer Joel Soisson—

Fitzpatrick (a.k.a. pop star Vitamin C), Mary's roommate and co-worker from the Virgin Megastore, and a sexy reporter named Valerie Sharp, played by Jeri Ryan (*STAR TREK: VOYAGER*). Describing Solina, Esposito said, "I think becoming a vampire for her was her absolute dream. This is like the best thing ever. She truly loves the power, loves everything about it." Fitzpatrick says that it wasn't a difficult task for Dracula to seduce Lucy. "She's eager to experience many things, eager to experience life," she explained. "So when faced with the opportunity to explore the other world with Dracula, I think she is excited and intrigued."

It is day 49 of filming and the producers have recreated a slice of Mardi Gras in the French Quarter. Revelers are dancing in the streets, exchanging plastic beads with women on balconies flashing their breasts. Tonight there is an unusually heavy proliferation of "religious types" waving crosses and signs. Simon is chasing Solina and Lucy through the crowd.

Patrick Lussier explains, as in Rudyard Kipling's *Riki-Tiki-Tavi*, you should never chase a cobra into a hole that is wide enough for him to turn around in. Solina and Lucy are leading Van Helsing's young protégé into a trap. Solina stops to feed on a girl in the crowd. Very cat-like, she takes her against a wall then slinks away. For her role as Solina, Esposito watched a lot of National Geographic specials on cats, tigers, leopards, etc. "Just to see their move-

ment, how they go in for a kill," she said. "I wanted to keep it very cat-like." She shows off her long fingernails with a smile. Makeup supervisor Gary J. Tunnicliffe also designed canine fangs to match Solina's personality.

Oddly enough, these vampires don't really look out of place here. The city of New Orleans is very much a character in the film. "If you look at any of the mythology, even though Anne Rice has sort of co-opted the mythology of late, going back before that, [New Orleans] has been the epicenter of vam-

Breaking-in the vault where Van Helsing has imprisoned Dracula for a century, robbers Danny Masterson, Tig Fong, Sean Patrick Thomas and Lochlyn Munro.



DRACULA 2000

GERARD BUTLER

Playing the famous blood-sucker for a new century.

By David Rome

I interviewed the vampire as we walked through Lafayette Cemetery in New Orleans, ironically only a few blocks from the home of novelist Anne Rice. But this isn't one of Rice's vampires—this is the big guy himself. This is Dracula, alive and well and wreaking havoc in the 21st century. He walked sure-footed through this dark city of the dead as I stumbled behind trying to keep pace, as the movie lights were being turned off one by one, as the dark became darker still. A strange wind picked up, as lightning flashed brightly but silently across the sky. Where was he leading me?

Dashing Scottish actor Gerard Butler (ATTILA) is playing the title role in WES CRAVEN PRESENTS DRACULA 2000, a modern-day retelling of the classic Bram Stoker story. He follows in the footsteps of screen legends like Bela Lugosi and Christopher Lee to name but a few. "I didn't want to base it on anything that had been done before," said Butler with his heavy Scottish brogue.

So what about that accent? Is Dracula a Scotsman this time around? "I think because we don't really want to give away where he comes from or what he's all about, we used the most neutral accent, which was English. Not to say he's from England, but it's not to say he's from anywhere," Butler explained. "When I first went for the audition, I [showed] up with some weird European accent, and the director said, 'You don't have to worry about that,'" Butler added, with a laugh. "So you're not gonna have a heavy Hungarian or Rumanian accent. Just English, but not my Scottish. Although it would have been great to play this guy with a heavy Glasgow brogue, you know?" He smiled, no fangs at the moment.

Just because this 19th-century villain happens to find himself thrust into the 21st century, you might think he'd be a stranger in a strange land. But Dracula adapts and makes this world his own. "I think he is



Dashing Scottish actor Gerard Butler in TALOS, THE MUMMY. Miramax's idea of promoting their new Dracula is to keep his look a "secret"—oh, brother.

completely a fish out of water, but it's not really something that would cross his mind. It's more to the power of this guy," said Butler, who admits that most of the time Dracula isn't around the general public. He interacts mostly with the other main characters in what Butler describes with a smile as "quite intense situations."

"Only a couple of times you really see him out and about," he continued. "And it's not really for him to adapt. I don't think it would be something that would cross his mind."

Butler admits that playing Dracula isn't really a stretch for him. Talking to him, you get the impression that playing this role is as easy for him as walking in the dark amongst these tombs. "I am Dracula," said Butler confidently. "I'm the guy wearing the clothes. I'm the guy wearing the makeup. Of course you have to go somewhere else to play this character, but I'm surprised what I found when I came to play this role. You remember why you were cast, what you did, how you read for the part, and that to me was incredibly instinctive. I just had a feeling of how this guy should be. And that's what I did. And they liked that. They liked the intensity and the slightly crazy feel that there was a canvas that you could change at any time. And the sexiness of the character as well."

In DRACULA 2000, Dracula continues his reputation as one of the most seductive characters in film and literature, if not the most seductive of them all. It seems that he has quite an effect on the female characters in the film. Butler thinks for a moment, then says with a smile, "I do, don't I? Absolutely. I seduce all of them. Not always in the same way. In different ways, to different extents. But yeah, I certainly use my powers on every single one of them."

And like the character, Butler also likes to wear black. "I have a big, long jacket. I wear kind of a MATRIX deal [in the film], the image of that is a really powerful look. It makes him

stand apart from anything else. But you wouldn't be arrested for looking like that. So he could walk about." Butler admits that it's a bit uncomfortable wearing black in the hot New Orleans weather. Thankfully though, vampires only come out at night, when it's a little cooler.

Butler praised the production team for creating the atmosphere that inspires his performance. "When you come to play the part, suddenly you throw on your clothes, and you realize you have to do a lot less than you thought you were gonna have to do. When you're backed up by an amazing special effects team, an amazing D.O.P. [director of photography], and a brilliant director, suddenly you see, 'Well, I don't have to stand up and be the big bogeyman.' Which worked for me, because I would much rather play this guy with a lot more subtlety."

We emerged from the cemetery to the comforting light and traffic of the street. The only things that had bitten me were some mosquitoes. Butler almost stumbled, distracted by a lovely lady loitering near the front gate of the graveyard. He can't take his eyes off of her for the moment, his head twists almost all the way around as he continues to walk. Then he regains his focus and considers with a laugh, "Sometimes I think, what am I doing that's any different?" □



Justine Waddell as Mary, seduced by Dracula in New Orleans, where the production filmed on location.

pire behavior," Soisson said. "It's a unique environment, it has the atmosphere, it has the graves, it has the look, it has the feel, and the one thing that it does very well for us is it contrasts the modern and the ancient, which is very pivotal to this [story]." Filming on location proved inspiring for filmmakers and actors alike. Jennifer Esposito says of the city, "I think it adds such an amazing backdrop to the film. The mood is just so incredible."

"It's a fairly inspiring city," admitted Lussier. "We originally talked about setting it in New York, we talked about setting it in London. We came here and realized there was something about this city that was unlike any other city in the world. It was a city that was kind of clinging to the past, and was very much what the characters in the story were doing. Van Helsing especially is a man completely trapped by his past, and cannot adapt."

Dracula is the exact opposite "And Dracula is the ultimate adapter," Lussier explained. "He is from the past, but he's thrown out of his time by a century out of whack, and is put into a place that is totally open to him. It's a city where [there are] things like Mardi Gras, where people are more susceptible to his charms. And en masse. Sort of the ultimate feeding ground."

Dracula does experience a bit of culture shock along the way, but as Lussier says, he adapts very quickly. He is thrust into a world where "Virgin Megastore" has redefined the concept of virginity. And right inside is the 'Virgin' Mary herself, conveniently labeled with a nametag. He stumbles upon a head-banging rock video projected across the side of the Virgin Megastore and sees what Joel Soisson describes as "a 60-

second recap of all of the atrocities of the 20th century." Soisson explains, "You're seeing those images of death and destruction, world wars, the advent of amazing techniques of genocide. And this is a guy who sits there in mute witness to all of what's going on in front of him and all he can sort of react to is 'My God, you've surpassed me. I thought I was the guy who taught brutality, and now I'm the student, I'm learning, I'm the amateur.'"

Executive producer Wes Craven worked very closely with Patrick Lussier and Joel Soisson on developing the script. "Wes did involve himself very heavily in the script and molded it in ways that didn't change the story, but took advantage of techniques that he's very aware of and insights," Soisson revealed. "He gave us wonderful ideas and help in structuring and giving some really creepy, chilling gags." Then he added, with a laugh, "He also corrected all my spelling."

"Patrick comes from a totally different angle than me," Soisson admitted. "He's a huge fan of the Hammer films. And what he gets from those is the mist and the atmos-

Jonny Lee Miller prepares to dispatch a vampire with weaponry developed by Van Helsing, during studio filming in Toronto where the production was based.



"I'm not a Hammer kind of guy. I like a modern take on these things. I like it fast and fun. So we sort of mixed our own instincts together."

—Writer/producer Joel Soisson—

phere, the sexuality. I think we ramped up the sexuality about three-fold." He continued, "I'm not a Hammer kind of guy. I like modern takes on these things. I like outdoors, I like it kinda fast and fun. So we sort of mixed our own instincts together."

"At its core, it's a horror film. It's scary, it's creepy, it's atmospheric," Soisson explained. "But one of the things we've been able to do, thanks to the Dimension gang, is widen the canvas and really make it big and expansive. The opening heist, we think, rivals or exceeds MISSION IMPOSSIBLE. I mean it's really cool. And deliberately so. We wanted to have that element of the contemporary thriller."

All that action comes at a price. Craven admits that the budget has grown. "The budget now is more than I think we had for SCREAM 2," Craven revealed. The budget seems to be as big a secret as the "twist" that started this whole thing. I asked Joel Soisson about the budget as we walked along the outside wall of the Lafayette Cemetery. His lips moved as we passed a loud generator, I missed the answer. "Something between \$800,000 and X-MEN," he repeated with a laugh. Nobody would provide a straight answer.

Aside from the power of seduction, what other powers does Dracula possess? Does he turn into a bat like his predecessors on the silver screen? "He does in the trailer," Soisson jokes. "Basically, what we have done is pivoted off kind of the known aspects of what Dracula can do," he explained. "Rereading the Stoker novel, it's very interesting because they're very specific about what a vampire can do and what he can't do. I think we take greater pains to explain why. We start off with the known parameters of Dracula and then continue into our own world. And as we continue into that world, he does some things that would probably be surprising." Whispers in the wind hint that there's at least one scene in which Dracula appears as a wolf. Simon shoots him and the wolf scatters into a swarm of bats. "So the surprises don't really come from reinventing his physical powers. He really does-

WES CRAVEN

HORROR FILM GODFATHER

The auteur of SCREAM and Freddy Krueger on tackling the classics for Dimension's Bob Weinstein.

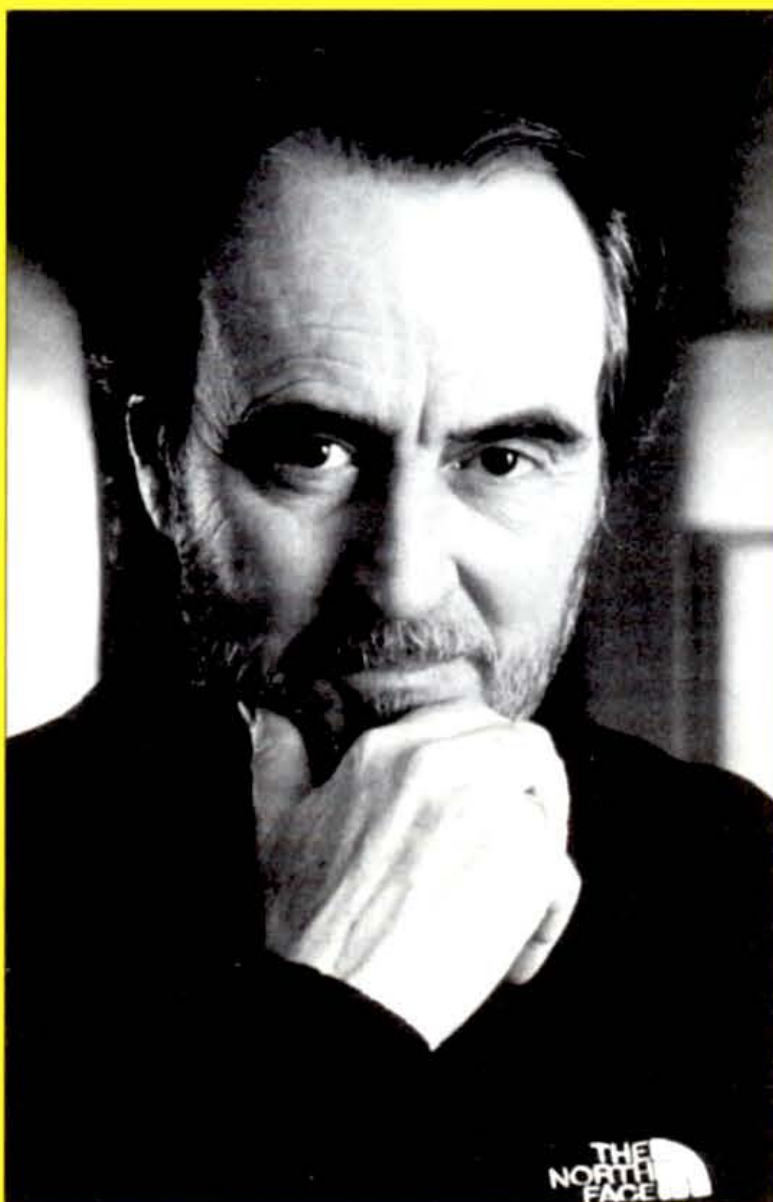
By David Rome

Wes Craven has been very busy lately. The horror-meister responsible for scaring us with everything from *LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT*, *SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW*, *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* and the *SCREAM* trilogy, among many others, has recently signed a four-year deal with Miramax and Dimension Films to executive-produce four genre films for Dimension under the "Wes Craven Presents" banner with his long-time producing partner, Marianne Maddalena. Craven will also direct and Maddalena will produce two films for Miramax and/or Dimension as part of the deal.

I caught up with Craven on his car phone as he faced the horrors of L.A. rush-hour traffic. As we spoke, his latest production, *WES CRAVEN PRESENTS DRACULA 2000*, was wrapping up principal photography in a swamp somewhere outside of New Orleans.

So why another Dracula movie? "It was actually sort of the brainchild of Bob Weinstein [of Dimension Films], who liked the idea of *Dracula 2000*," Craven admitted. "I think he's sort of been fascinated with the idea of redoing some of the old classics. So he and Patrick Lussier, the director, who at that time was my editor, tossed the idea around and Patrick came up with a treatment which I thought was very interesting. And that was sort of the way it got going." Craven described *DRACULA 2000* as "a mixture of the classic Dracula story set in a modern time..." He added, "And it has a very interesting twist in it in so far as the origin of Dracula." It was this "twist" [which no one involved in the production will reveal] that drew Craven to the project.

As the film's executive producer, Craven was involved in every aspect of the project's development, from the screenplay to the casting. Director Patrick Lussier and writer/producer Joel Siosson both praise Craven for his collaboration. "It's a tricky combination of being hands-on and yet giving the freedom to somebody that you want



Craven, directing *FOUNTAIN SOCIETY* for DreamWorks.

to have the chance to be a director," Craven said. "I was in on all the casting," he added, "and at the same time if Patrick really felt strongly about cast members that I didn't know, I basically went with Patrick." Craven himself chose Scottish actor Gerard Butler for the title role. "Of all the people they were looking at, I thought Gerry was by far the most striking," he said.

Wes Craven fans seem to get more excited when Craven himself directs. A few of the films Craven produced but did not direct proved to be disappointing at the box-office. Craven admits that he never considered directing *DRACULA 2000* himself. "[The projects for Dimension] were all stipulated from the get-go to be projects that we [he and Marianne Maddalena] would executive-produce," Craven explained. "In which we would try to find young directors and new directors and do relatively small

films, although this one I must say has grown. The budget now is more than I think we had for *SCREAM 2*." He added, "But the general idea is to bring new filmmakers to the genre."

So will we be seeing more remakes or updates to other classic horror stories? Something like *FRANKENSTEIN 2001* perhaps? "Well, I hope we don't stay with that date thing," he laughed. "I think that date thing is already obsolete." Craven admitted, "We are investigating *JEKYLL AND HYDE* for me to direct... so some of those old classics I think are ripe for a story... [but] I certainly don't want to go back and do a lot of things that have been done before, which is always the danger."

Craven is encouraged by the flexibility of his deal with Miramax/Dimension. He hinted that *TURN OF THE SCREW* might even be revived, a project that Miramax turned down when Craven brought it in once before. "[The Weinstein brothers] seem to be open for us bringing any sort of material to them, so long as it's at all genre," he said. "That's one of the nice things, especially for my directing jobs, they seem to be willing to extend the idea of 'what is' genre... something that might be suspense or thriller or a classic piece of material. That's very encouraging."

Will we see any more *SCREAM* movies as part of that deal? "I know that Bob [Weinstein] always said that he didn't intend to do more than three," said Craven. "But he doesn't have to if he can go out and make a comedy based on it... and make, you know, \$140 million, I think it's up to now." Craven was referring to *SCARY MOVIE*, sort of the "unofficial" sequel to the *SCREAM* trilogy. "I think Miramax, or Dimension specifically, has done an extraordinarily clever thing," Craven admitted. "In effect they've continued the franchise by turning it into a comedy... and done even better than they did with the horror film. And there's no limit on those. I mean, they can make *SCARY MOVIE 3*, *4*, *5*... I know that they're already at work on *SCARY MOVIE 2*. That's gonna happen quite



Craven (r) directs Skeet Ulrich and Neve Campbell in *SCREAM*, putting Miramax on the horror film map.

quickly... and will be a continuation of [*SCREAM*] without actually being a continuation."

After finishing *SCREAM 2*, Craven took some time off to write his first novel, *Fountain Society*. Craven admits that he originally came up with the idea for the story about 20 years ago. "At the time the idea of cloning somebody and having a brain transplant was frankly considered so fantastical that most people balked at that," he said of the science fiction thriller. "And it really wasn't until after I had sold the idea of the book to Simon & Schuster that, I think it was a week later that the announcement was made about Dolly [the sheep clone], and suddenly everybody was calling me up like I was some sort of visionary or something." Craven has always seen the story as a film. "I had actually had two or three writers develop it as a script also, and none of them seemed to quite satisfy me," he revealed. "So they just went into a drawer... and finally I decided to pitch it as a novel idea and wrote it myself."

Craven enjoyed the expansive canvas that writing a novel presented. "In many ways it's a much bigger ball field," he admitted. "Not only can you go into a character's mind, but you can jump back and forth in time and place and there's not budgetary restrictions to worry about. The novel was set on quite a large scale."

And now the story has come full circle. Craven is set to direct the screen adaptation of *FOUNTAIN SOCIETY* for Dreamworks—pending approval of the script. "We have Amy Holden Jones [*THE RELIC*, *INDECENT PROPOSAL*] right now working on a script, and we're supposed to take delivery on a draft towards the end of this

month [September]," he said. "And that will be the go/no-go decision right there on whether to make the film, because [in the very first draft] we'll have to believe that we can make the film out of it...or else we'll have to virtually put it off for a year."

After writing *Fountain Society*, Craven then took a surprise turn and directed his first mainstream, non-genre film, *MUSIC OF THE HEART*. So what drew him to that particular project? "Well, I really liked the basic story," he explained. "I had seen the documentary, *SMALL WONDERS*, about two years before, and so when Bob and Harvey [Weinstein] were running down the list of properties that they owned, and I heard that name, I immediately had that positive experience with it."

Craven added that there were also many elements in the story that were close to his own personal life. "I had been a teacher, I had gone through divorce, both as a child with parents divorcing, and as an adult," he revealed. "I lived in New York for many years before I started in the film business... and classical music, that all means a great deal to me." Craven added, "And obviously the chance to work with a major star

Horror is my business: a youthful Craven (r) directs *LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT* in 1972, with cameraman Victor Hurwitz, who died shortly thereafter.



“We might well all [end up] being called the worst people in the world in the next year or so, which might affect the kinds of films I make.”

—Director Wes Craven—

like Meryl Streep."

Might we see Craven direct another mainstream film again soon? "Well, I think *FOUNTAIN SOCIETY* will be much more of a mainstream film...certainly it's not a horror film," he said. Mainstream probably isn't the right word—how about a non-Wes Craven film? "I certainly hope to make that part of my repertoire in the next four or five years. If all goes well, we'll be doing *FOUNTAIN SOCIETY* next, and then we'll be back in the Miramax/Dimension world for the foreseeable future."

Craven went on to explain that *FOUNTAIN SOCIETY* was the only exemption from his Miramax/Dimension deal. "They had the right to buy it, they passed, so we had the right to do it outside. So once that's done, if it is done, then we'll be back there," he explained. "It's a fifty-fifty thing there in as far as which brother I work with [Harvey or Bob Weinstein]. I know Bob has things that he wants me to do, but also there are projects that I receive from Harvey's office."

There's also a dark cloud looming over Hollywood at the moment, and some studio executives and filmmakers alike are keeping their umbrellas within reach. "It's also a wildcard," Craven explained. "Right now there's a congressional meeting on violence in cinema...accusing Hollywood of causing dire damage to children. And that's being taken very seriously by the Director's Guild. In fact, I'm gonna probably be on a panel discussing how to defend ourselves against this." The Federal Trade Commission just released a report titled "Marketing

Violent Entertainment to Children: A Review of Self-Regulation and Industry Practices in the Motion Picture, Music Recording & Electronic Game Industries." And the report finds Hollywood guilty. "We might well all [end up] being called the worst people in the world within the next year or so," Craven continued, "which might affect the kind of films I make, too. I may back away from genre films for a year or two."

Whatever happens, Wes Craven is prepared for it—he has a mighty big umbrella. □

n't go flying anywhere, but the way he enters and exits can be very creepy and surprising."

The film's makeup effects supervisor, Gary J. Tunnicliffe is no stranger to vampires. He was responsible for "Frost's death" in *BLADE*, as well as the nasty demise of several of the vampire assassins. And as a veteran of the *HELLRAISER* films, he's seen a few gallons of blood in his time. "I'm kind of a blood nut," admitted the 32-year-old, mild-mannered Englishman. "I hate bad blood." Tunnicliffe brings his own special recipe for blood to *DRACULA 2000*: It's a mixture of caramel and red food coloring.

Tunnicliffe started prepping for *DRACULA 2000* five weeks before filming began. He worked seven days a week with a skilled crew of about 20 painters, sculptors, hair artists and others at his shop in Los Angeles before packing up 26 boxes of effects for the show. "The death fare has been pretty subtle," he admitted. "A lot of it's [seen] off-camera—finding the victims afterwards—when Dracula's done his thing."

Tunnicliffe revealed that Dracula has several looks in the film. "At the beginning of the film, he's been depleted, so he's very withdrawn, kind of emaciated." The first stage of Dracula's rebirth required a full-sized silicone body. Tunnicliffe found a man in Toronto who was incredibly emaciated. "We cast him, and then we enhanced the look of that around a silicone body which [we] then painted up." We see the second stage when Dracula first feeds. "Then we did a second stage makeup on Gerry [Butler], which was just your standard prosthetic fare, two-piece prosthetic makeup, contact lenses, dentures..."

And finally we see Dracula transform into the look he takes on for the rest of the film. Tunnicliffe explained that his work has been enhanced with CGI work by Erik Henry (*THE X-FILES*) and his crew. "We tried to do something a bit different, something a bit more ethereal, and organic, more than just a morph."

So what would a Dracula movie be without fangs? "Dracula's got three stages of teeth. He's got kind of a very subtle canine, and then a slightly elongated canine, then a real blood-sucking canine." Tunnicliffe reported that they tried to design teeth that matched the characters' personality. "We've given Jennifer Esposito, who plays Solina, kind of a second tooth canine, a very cat-like pointed fang. We've given Jeri Ryan a kind of classic fang."



Plummer as Van Helsing, with a gun armed with silver bullets. With production wrapping only in late September, delays prevented a Halloween 2000 release.

And the eyes? "Patrick Lussier wanted something to make the eye look like the body was infected with blood," Tunnicliffe explained. "So we [have] what we call a 'red ring' lens. It's very subtle, but at the same time disturbing. The eye seems to be flooded with blood." Tunnicliffe reported that there are a few striking variations on that. Omar Epps, for instance, wears solid red lenses at one point, so his entire eye was bright red.

As for the overall look of the vampire girls, Tunnicliffe reported that he consulted with director Lussier and they came up with a "very classic glamour look." "Sort of high-fashion like Cindy Crawford, very dark eyes," he said. He claimed the look they were shooting for was for you not to think there was anything different about these girls until you got up close. Tunnicliffe smiled, "It's kinda like standing on the sidelines of a Hammer horror film at times."

Tunnicliffe gets to do a bit of acting in the film's elaborate opening, in a scene straight out of Stoker's novel, the *Demeter* and its dead crew sails for England with Dracula aboard. Tunnicliffe has a cameo as the Captain of the ship—lashed to the wheel, his throat torn out, rats nibbling at his face. "It was a great scene," he recalled with a smile. "They had hundreds of rats running across the deck, water crashing..." The production was filming on two soundstages that

day, and everybody came over to watch. Everyone wanted to get their picture taken with him. And the rats didn't bother him at all. There was one that just sat on his shoulder and stared at the camera the whole time.

Dimension originally wanted WES CRAVEN PRESENTS *DRACULA 2000* released in October. Then the release date got pushed back to a more realistic December 22nd. But the film has a lot of special effects, and listening to all the actors talking about acting to "no one" in front of green screens makes one wonder if we might be seeing WES CRAVEN PRESENTS *DRACULA 2001* instead. Will there be time enough to fill in all that green? Director Lussier's experience as an editor definitely helps on the set, especially when time is of the essence. "I'm told I shoot like I cut," Lussier laughed. "I don't do a lot of masters. I think there's only like two scenes in the whole movie that I actually shot masters for." He admitted, "We have an amazing cinematographer, Pete Pau. You know exactly what's required, [there's] not a lot of fat. We have some story

fat, but of course that all gets trimmed out [to] get down to the lean, mean [feigns coughing] 106 minutes that you're supposed to be," he laughed.

The cast and crew are still at lunch. Most of the movie lights are turned off. A warm wind picks up out of nowhere and lightning flashes across the sky without any sound. Walking through this city late at night, you sometimes get the feeling that vampires could really exist. I asked Joel Soisson if he felt any supernatural presence here. "Not until yesterday," he admitted. "We were shooting one corner of the Lafayette graveyard, and I walked away so I could make a phone call, and I heard voices, like really low, guttural, sort of incoherent voices and they're always behind me. So I'd turn around and it sounded like they were in something, like a crypt. When you're alone you start believing more than you normally would and I'm starting to think that there are really people out here." Soisson finally gave up on the phone call and went back to the main unit. He continued, "It wasn't till I sat down and put on my headphone monitors [which are used to monitor dialogue] that I realized I had my headphones cocked around to the back here [on his neck], and it was just plain Gerry Butler doing his little Dracula schtick." □

MAR

Marvel Studios

By Scott Pierce

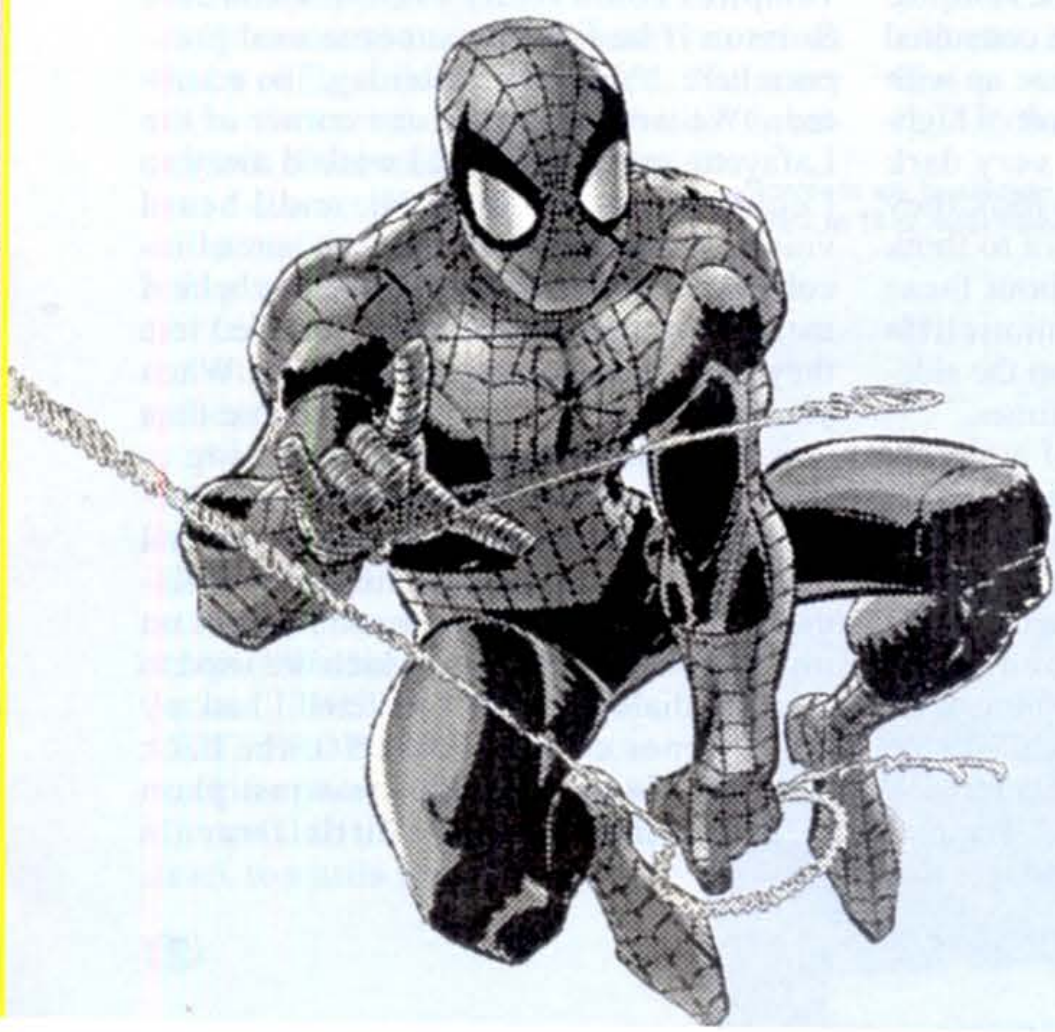
With the success of X-MEN cementing Marvel Comics' cinematic potential while simultaneously generating tremendous profits, the future bodes well for other Marvel movies in the works. The man responsible for recruiting the talent to realize comic books on film is Marvel Studios president Avi Arad. Starting as far back as 1993 to bring comics to the big screen the correct way, it's only recently that his persistence has begun to pay off. Before being involved in the realm of movies, Arad was a toy inventor. "I'd been inventing toys for many, many years for Hasbro, Mattel, Galoob, you name it," said Arad from his offices at Sony, where he is prepping SPIDER-MAN. "Then I got involved in animation." In 1993 when Toy Biz and Marvel Comics merged, Arad took over the entertainment part of Marvel and began to develop motion pictures. Along the way, Arad also produced animated shows for Marvel such as X-MEN, SPIDER-MAN, IRON MAN and FANTASTIC FOUR.

Because of the overwhelming response to X-MEN, other Marvel movies in the pipeline are moving through the development process at a faster pace. "I think it's inevitable," related Arad. "It's a dangerous business because movies are not inexpensive," he said, "and therefore, success like X-MEN makes studios really comfortable."

Most likely, the first of these disparate projects to begin filming will be SPIDER-MAN, for release by Sony Pictures May, 2002, directed by Sam Raimi with Tobey Maguire (CIDER HOUSE RULES) portraying Peter Parker. The script originally had nemeses Dr. Octopus and the Green Goblin, but now only has the one villain, Nor-



Rebecca Romijn-Stamos as Mystique returns in X-MEN 2 & 3, which 20th Century Fox may film back-to-back next year. Tobey Maguire stars as SPIDER-MAN for Sony and director Sam Raimi, but the comic's Doc Oc (below right) is now out.



Marvel Movie Magic

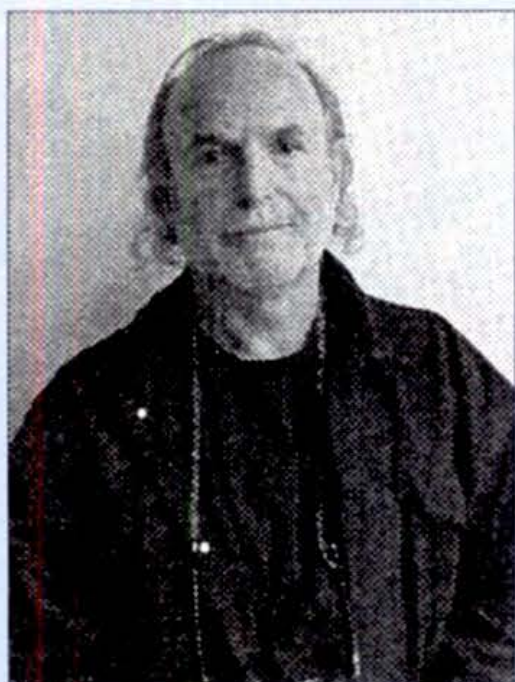
Studios chief Avi Arad on film Things to come.

man Osborn, who becomes the Green Goblin. Originally rumored to be a role for Nicolas Cage, the Goblin role will be brought to life by Academy Award nominee John Malkovich. Nicholas Cage will be part of another Marvel movie although the precise project at press time is unknown. Of the SPIDER-MAN movie, Arad said, "We are doing some technically amazing stuff. I think it's going to be something special dramatically and emotionally."

The slate of Marvel movies in current development at various studios also includes FANTASTIC FOUR, currently in the pre-production stage, which still has Raja Gosnell (BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE) attached as director with a script by Michael France (GOLDENEYE) rewritten by Sam Hamm (BATMAN) being co-produced by Chris Columbus' (HARRY POTTER) company 1492, and distributed by 20th Century-Fox.

THE HULK has been scripted by FANTASTIC FOUR screenwriter Michael France, rewritten by Michael Tolkin (DEEP IMPACT) and is now being given a rewrite by X-MEN scribe David Hayter, with

Arad, the Israeli-born president of Marvel Studios, a comic book fan now living out his boyhood dream.



Also in pre-production at Fox is FANTASTIC FOUR, to be directed by Raja Gosnell from a script re-write by BATMAN's Sam Hamm. Above: The unreleased 1993 Roger Corman version.



Universal Pictures distributing.

Acclaimed screenwriter Andrew Kevin Walker (SEVEN) is currently writing SILVER SURFER, with rumors of Ang Lee being approached to direct. Another project in the script stage is DAREDEVIL, written by Mark Steven Johnson (SIMON BIRCH) who is also attached to direct for New Regency.

Arad also revealed that a unique Marvel project called GENOMAX is in TV development in collaboration with Tribune Entertainment. The project deals with Genome Technology, which is the mapping of genes, human and mutant. Arad described the series as "a very interesting depiction of what mutants in the future will be. It's a new concept at Marvel—instead of mutants from birth, it's customized mutants genetically created."

Before X-MEN even came out, Arad noted, "I was pretty optimistic." Leading all the way up to X-MEN's release, rumors abounded on the Internet about the film, often drawing negative

criticism from the fans. The fans are blatantly honest, even harsh in their opinions, which Arad said, "is great by the way because it shows the passion." Continuing, he added, "They care and it's worth it."

Fox signed their X-MEN cast to multi-picture deals and is said to be exploring filming X-MEN 2 and 3 back-to-back to cut costs. Arad knows the direction he wants the sequels to take. "The movie says to you basically, 'let's follow Wolverine and see where he's going,'" said Arad. The fans on the internet and the creative powers that be seem to be on the same wavelength as to the direction the next should take. Noted Arad, "The instincts are right because they're talking about Operation Zero Tolerance, which obviously we want to get deeper into, Weapon X, that we touched upon. People want to see some of the Sentinels and obviously Sentinels should be dealt with cautiously. We don't want to have the Tin Man from THE WIZARD OF OZ."

Part of what made translat-

ing X-MEN to the big screen work was basing it in the real world. "We have to be very cautious with that," offered Arad, "and make sure we don't take away from it. We can't all of a sudden be BATMAN. It's not a stylized world—it's the real world. BATMAN was obviously glorious for what it was. We don't want to visit that world, we want to stay where we are."

As far as other characters to make it into the sequel, Beast, Nightcrawler and Gambit are the most talked about to be included. "I'll definitely push to get Beast in there," said Arad. "I think that will work very well with Zero Tolerance. People like him and Nightcrawler really have no place to hide."

Prior to the release of X-MEN, at last year's Cannes Film Festival, Marvel signed a massive deal with Artisan Entertainment encompassing some 15 characters with flexibility to increase beyond this initial core. The new deal includes well-known staples from the Marvel Universe like Captain America,



In a development deal with Artisan, **THE MIGHTY THOR** is headed for television and **THE PUNISHER** is being readied as a feature film.



Thor, and The Punisher to a myriad of popular characters such as Morbius, Deadpool, Black Panther, Iron Fist, Ant Man, Longshot, Power Pack, Man-Thing, The Black Widow, Dazzler and Mort the Dead Teenager. The deal develops Marvel properties into feature films, television series or made-for-TV movies, as well as product for the internet in the form of short films and videos. No sooner was the deal announced than the phones started ringing.

Arad has had a lasting relationship with Artisan's co-chief executive officer Amir Malin, which led to this unprecedented deal. Artisan "is an excellent market to use and they are good producers," said Arad in explaining the choice of pairing with the company. "They understand the Marvel Universe very

well. The development crew understand our business, our characters and therefore we are a very good match."

Artisan's first Marvel movie will be **THE PUNISHER**, while their first project for television will be **THE MIGHTY THOR**. The mythology for the Thor character is appealing for the television format because there is so much information to convey. Arad noted, "It's such a huge universe with Thor being the God of the Nine Realms." Arad predicted that "together we will make the kind of movies [like the next **PUNISHER**] that will be unique and special for us."

What is extremely promising has been the response from the creative arena. Artisan senior vice-president Patrick Gunn pointed out that "there's kind of a personal attachment to some of these characters," because people have grown up with them. "The response from the creative community has really been incredible," noted Gunn including, "the really A-list writers, directors, producers, people who want to be involved in developing Marvel properties for both TV and film. We are talking to writers and directors to listen to what characters that they're interested in, while at the same time we are deciding what characters we want to get involved with most immediately." Gunn's favorite: Captain America.

A second pact Marvel made at Cannes with Crystal Sky Entertainment, calls for the filming of **GHOST RIDER**, with an expected budget of \$75 million

"X-MEN has to be very cautious," said Marvel President Avi Arad. "We can't all of a sudden be BATMAN. We don't want to visit that world, we want to stay where we are."

which may feature Johnny Depp as the avenging motorcycle rider with the flaming skull, as well as being co-produced by Academy-Award winning actor Jon Voight, who may give his acting talents to the film. The film will be co-financed and distributed by Dimension Films in a three-picture deal.

"We met with Johnny Depp who loves the idea," said Arad, "and is into it, but obviously we have to work up a deal of the logistics." Stephen Norrington, director of **BLADE**, is in place to helm the picture. The **GHOST RIDER** film will focus on the original character of Johnny Blaze and his girlfriend Roxanne, rather than the later incarnation featuring Danny Ketch.

Reuniting with Norrington is **BLADE** screenwriter David S. Goyer who co-wrote a **GHOST RIDER** script years ago, when it was originally set up at Savoy Pictures. Arad proclaimed Goyer "the Godfather" of the recent interest in the production of Marvel movies.

Noted Goyer, "When **GHOST RIDER** was at Savoy Pictures they didn't know what they wanted." Now in the right hands, **GHOST RIDER** is gearing up to be as kinetically appealing as

BLADE. "I sort of have a new approach that's much more simplified," explained Goyer, "and in some ways it's maybe what I would have done had I been allowed to do it back then."

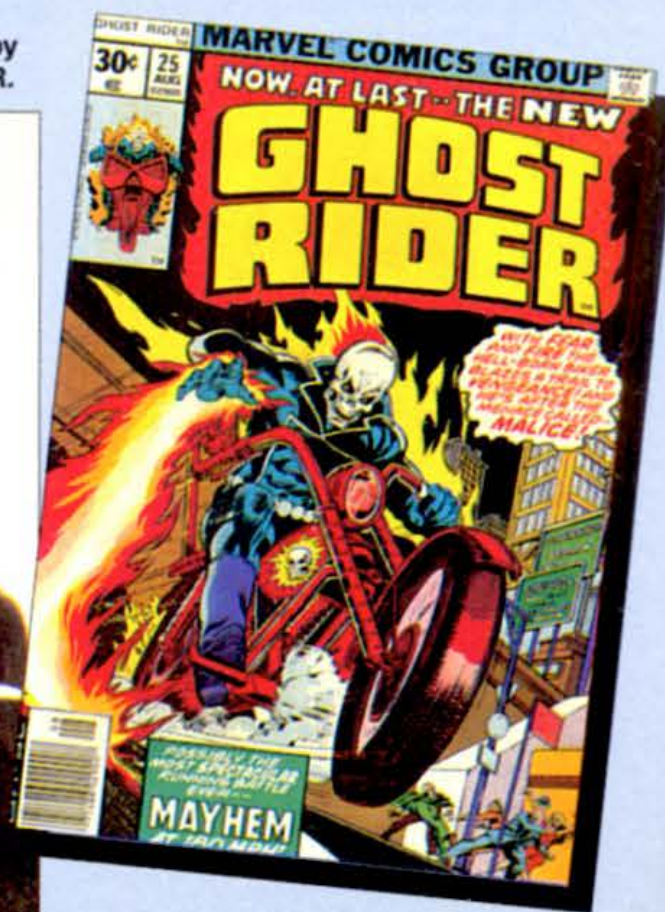
Goyer, who also scripted **DARK CITY**, is heavily involved in the highly anticipated **BLADE 2: BLOOD HUNT**, which he will write as well as produce for director Guillermo del Toro. Filming on **BLADE 2** is expected to start in January 2001.

Goyer may be involved, with the Artisan deal as well. "There's talk of me producing four or five properties that Marvel went into partnership at Artisan," said Goyer. If plans proceed positively, Goyer would supervise stories and be involved on the producing end.

In the past, missteps have occurred on the road to the recent success of Marvel movies. The recent positive trend resides with Marvel's man at the top, Avi Arad, Goyer said, "I think Avi has a good sense of the film business, a good commercial sense." Although Arad humbly added, "we are attracting the right talent to make this a real worthy cause."

The plethora of superhero characters that surround Arad now were nonexistent to him while growing up in Israel. Arad's access to comic books then was extremely limited to just Tarzan. But, he noted, "When I came to this country, it was like being a kid in a candy store. I've always loved comics as a form of literature." Summed-up Arad about his success at Marvel movies, "I got to live out the dream." □

Wesley Snipes will return in **BLADE 2** for New Line Cinema, again scripted by David Goyer, who has also penned and will produce Marvel's **GHOST RIDER**.



SCI-FI, HORROR & FANTASY FILMS POWER 50 2000

The artists and execs who have the clout and talent to make dreams come true.

By Dan Persons

It's gotta be easier for the bigger magazines, the *Varieties* and *Premieres* and *Entertainment Weeklies*. Power for them can be easily ascertained by taking a list of the usual subjects and seeing if they satisfy a standardized set of criteria: who netted the most boxoffice; who screwed the most friends; which one can drive the largest number of subservients to their knees at the mere mention of his/her name? We can imagine such a list coming together in, oh, five minutes. Four hours if you include lunch.

It's harder to quantify power in the genre community. We're too diverse, seeking too many things from the people who wish to entertain us. Earning power and the ability to ride roughshod over your fellow humanity take a back seat to a larger set of parameters: whose next project is most eagerly awaited; who has had the most impact on the arts of science-fiction, fantasy, and horror; who has the greatest corps of insanely loyal fans; and on and on.

It throws a bushelful of complications into the task of compiling a list of genre's most powerful people.

It also turns this into rather a more positive exercise. We don't feel obligated to include anyone whose ruthlessness behind the scenes outweighs the quality of his/her work on-screen (Richard Hatch would've been voted off *our* island within



Producer/director James Cameron tops our seventh annual list of the genre's most important and influential players, with Terminator Arnold Schwarzenegger.

the first day). There are always people with healthier priorities to supplant the bastards; people whose power derives from a tangible, audience response—public or industry. This also means that we've included no one on our list *just* because he/she made a lot of *money*.

Quality has to be there, and even if we haven't personally embraced some of our candidates (sorry, Chris Columbus), we've made allowances for the fact that our perception of quality is by no means the final word on the subject. It's not the People's Choice Awards (thank God), but we're comfortable with the level of fairness we've applied to the task.

A task that, in the end, wound up more a pleasurable effort than we initially anticipated. These are people whose

power seems, at first glance, to obtain from diverse sources, but upon closer examination actually all flows from the simple ability to bring pleasure to their audiences. There's enough here to celebrate, and also quite a bit to argue about (we'll entertain ourselves with the vision of Hollywood denizens gathering in tight knots around their lattes, agonizing over why someone was nominated to the list, why their own esteemed personages were passed over. We're easily amused that way). We don't kid ourselves that such a list really *means* anything—when one of our candidates cures cancer or stems the spread of AIDS in Africa, we'll readjust our estimation. But for what it's worth, these are the people with the ability to make us smile, to make us think, to make us feel.

They are the people who, in the world of genre filmmaking, wield the true power.

1 JAMES CAMERON ↑
King of the World, Woo-Hoo

(Last year's ranking: 6)

How would you like to be this guy? He not only pilots two blockbusters to worldwide #1, but manages, twice, to rub success in the faces of those who sneered at his late deliveries and blown budgets. Cameron's taking his time now, and who can blame him? For one thing, it allows Tinseltown to recover from that Academy Awards performance (not that his show of hubris was really any worse than, say, asking an actress dressed as a Native American to accept your best actor award). For another, it helps drive home the point that, at this stage, he could pretty much ask for anything and get it. It would be refreshing if he now decided to take a breath, and do something that didn't push the budgetary and technological envelopes (like maybe answering Arnold's calls and lensing a *TERMINATOR* sequel that harkens back to the shoestring innovation of the first film), but we're not sure it's in his composition anymore. Meanwhile, the old saw about only one place to go from number one still holds. More than a few people are hoping that *DARK ANGEL* will become Cameron's *SEAQUEST*.



Steven Spielberg, still directing while running DreamWorks and juggling projects like JURASSIC PARK 3.

2 STEVEN SPIELBERG

My Son, The Powerhouse Director

(Last year's ranking: 2)

The big news: Spielberg's gonna direct MINORITY REPORT! No, wait, sorry, he's actually looking at HARRY POTTER! Hold it...INDY 4! It's gonna be INDY 4! Oops, wrong again, it's AI. Actually, the big news is that just speculating on what Spielberg's going to do is big news. Does it seem odd that a filmmaker of his caliber would be throwing his power behind so personal and experimental a choice as the late Stanley Kubrick's long-delayed SF project? Keep in mind that the last "personal," "experimental" film he did was a little something called ET.

3 GEORGE LUCAS

Darth Vader's Real Daddy

(Last year's ranking: 1)

For the next two years, fans will watch and hope, praying that the lesson has been learned, and Lucas' return to the director's chair is more than just the most overhyped comeback in film history. If he delivers an EMPIRE STRIKES BACK in EPISODE 2, it will be not-so-young Luke's genuine rebirth. If he logs another PHANTOM MENACE, he can probably

count on releasing EPISODE 3 direct-to-video.

4 JIM CARREY

America's Most Abundant Source of Natural Energy

(Last year's ranking: 16)

People don't really go for Carrey when he goes all Method, so MAN ON THE MOON and ME, MYSELF, AND IRENE left the rubber-faced actor stranded somewhere in Robin Williams-land. The exile is about to end: with the release of the upcoming GRINCH movie, he should finally net the box-office boost that will help reestablish his creds. Anyway, he's a blessing on the makeup budget: Rick Baker only had to use one-quarter the latex to get the desired effect.

5 HARRISON FORD

Sensitive Tough Guy

(Last year: not ranked)

And about that Indy sequel, isn't there a little aura of *El Exigente* in the image of yet another re-write being offered up with trembling hands for Ford to savor? There's been no rejoicing in the village yet, but he'd better move fast; otherwise, they'll have to work in a scene in which Indy breaks off from battling Nazis in order to get to Denny's for the early-bird special.

6 M. NIGHT SHYAMALAN

**Writer/Director/
Bruce Willis' Best Friend**

(Last year: not ranked)

Directing/writing THE SIXTH SENSE, '99s most

George Lucas, #3, keeping the Force alive in the '80s with live-act impresario Kenneth Feld, but can he correct the missteps of PHANTOM MENACE?



Remember #4 Jim Carrey as a Dracula wannabe in 1985's ONCE BITTEN?

engaging horror film for Disney, not to mention scripting STUART LITTLE, that same year's most successful kid's film *not* from Disney, has boosted Shyamalan to the forefront of Hollywood's new guard. That means that a lot is riding on UNBREAKABLE. Judging by the trailer distributed via CD-ROM to just about every living entity on Earth, the new film contains all the style of SIXTH SENSE. Potential problem: it may have too many of the tricks, too.

7 THE WACHOWSKI BROTHERS

**Odder Than the Coens?
Maybe. Wealthier?
Oh My God, Yes.**

(Last year: not ranked)

Directing two sequels back-to-back is a pretty ballsy move. Then again, considering that these guys debuted with the lesbian-noir thriller BOUND then proceeded directly to THE MATRIX, it appears they've

got balls to spare. As with Lucas, their power will mount as speculation continues on how they'll follow up the comic-book film to end all comic-book films. Meanwhile, certain quarters—particularly those execs high up at Warner Bros.—will be praying that no one remembers BACK TO THE FUTURES 2 and 3.

8 EDDIE MURPHY

Family-Friendly Actor at Last

(Last year's ranking: 19)

With maturity comes wisdom. Well, not always, but it seems to have worked in Murphy's case. Ironically, having resolved to keep his ego in check and place his considerable talents in the service of more astute filmmakers, the actor is now more powerful than when he was plastering his name all over such vanity productions as HARLEM NIGHTS. The NUTTY PROFESSORS and DOCTOR DOLITTLEs net the big boxoffice—meanwhile, we cherish his ability to parody himself in things like BOWFINGER.

9 BOB AND HARVEY WEINSTEIN

Miramax Miracle Men

(Last year's ranking, Bob Weinstein only: 9)

They stir up the waters with DOGMA and raise up the dough with SCREAM (that satire of slasher films) and SCARY MOVIE (that satire of that satire of slasher films).

They turn heads by bringing Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz into the fold for the supernatural *SERIOS*. Southern Baptists may whine about their presence under the Disney banner (not that those complaints have anything to do with, ahem, anti-Semitism, right?), but Eisner needs them, both for the cachet, and the cash.

10 JOHN LASSETER

Pixar's Prime Director

(Last year's ranking: 10)

If there was a God, the man would've gotten at the very least a Best Director nomination, if not the Oscar itself, for *TOY STORY 2*. He isn't directing cartoons, he's *making films*, and doing a better job at it than many live-action directors. As this fact slowly dawns on the rest of Hollywood (and as Disney realizes what a wan effort *DINOSAUR* was), Lasseter's indispensability in the development of a new film medium will become more and more apparent.

11 JOSS WHEDON

Network Savior, Builder of Better Vampire Slayers

(Last year's ranking: 28)

The *Buffy*-master has been keeping it going and keeping it fresh. Meanwhile, *ANGEL* proved he could take at least one step away from the Hellmouth and postpone the curse of the one-hit-wonder. He was the dose of adrenaline the WB needed, but can he remain relevant when he isn't playing with teen vampires?

12 CHRIS CARTER

X-FILES X-Mastermind (If Fox Will Only Let Him)

(Last year's ranking: 14)

HARSH REALM could have been better, but the network botched the debut so badly and is in such desperate straits after the truncated reign of Herzog that the *X-FILES*-meister is still able to wield some heady influence. This year's challenge: keeping the *FILES* going (Robert Patrick was a brilliant casting decision), while counting on *THE LONE GUNMEN* and his helmage of *SERIOS* to prove

M. NIGHT SHYAMALAN

Genre films that resonate, the director on following up THE SIXTH SENSE.

Talk about power! Writer/director M. Night Shyamalan conceives of a project, picks his stars and release date and—*voila*—18 months later audiences are lined up. That's what happened with *UNBREAKABLE*, now in theatres, on the heels of his breakthrough hit *THE SIXTH SENSE*. Shyamalan modestly expresses amazement (see 32:4/5) at his good luck and howls at great spiritual forces at work. We'd give just a little credit to his sheer brilliance as a filmmaker.

Shyamalan had not even finished editing *THE SIXTH SENSE* when he started developing ideas for *UNBREAKABLE*, which opened November 24. "I had actually been working on another story for a few months during post-production on *THE SIXTH SENSE*, and was just at the stage when I was going to commit to writing it," said Shyamalan. "Then I had this idea about a man being the sole survivor of a horrific train crash who walks away without a scratch and how he begins to question who he is and what his purpose in life is. The idea was just so provocative and intrigued me so much, that I immediately started outlining it. Within a couple days, I had it to the level of the movie that I'd been working on for months, so I just kept on going.

Shyamalan is backed-up in the film by his *SIXTH SENSE* collaborators, producers Barry Mendel and Sam Mercer. "The three of us together as produc-



Shyamalan (l), just 30 and #6 on our list, has *UNBREAKABLE* in release, with Tak Fujimoto, the cinematographer of *THE SIXTH SENSE*.

ers is very effective," said Shyamalan. "Barry handles a great deal in regards to many of the creative aspects of making the film and the marketing, and Sam is great at being able to physically execute my movies, he always figures out a beautiful way to make the impossible happen. Most importantly though is that they are good men and we all have the same temperament and have a really great time together. So between the three of us we are checks and balances for each other practically, creatively and emotionally."

Securing Bruce Willis and Samuel L. Jackson in the early stages of *UNBREAKABLE*'s development greatly enhanced Shyamalan's scripting process. "Because I had such a clear vision for the film, I could literally see the story unfolding in my mind as I was writing, which enabled me to develop charac-

ters that would specifically play to the strengths of each of the actors I envisioned for the role," said Shyamalan. "It is really incredible to have had the opportunity to do that because I think it enhanced all of their performances in ways that far exceeded even my own vision and expectations.

"One of the things I wanted to do, was continue the relationship I had with Bruce Willis on *THE SIXTH SENSE*. I felt like we had just got to a great place, but knew there was another level of depth and another level of dimensionality of the characters that he can play that I really wanted to see.

Summed up Shyamalan, just 30 years old, about his passion for directing, "When I wasn't making films, I used to wake up in the morning with a little bit of sadness and I didn't want to feel that my whole life," he said. "So there was a point where I just listened carefully and figured out what I wanted to do. And now, even though that feeling of sadness still comes and goes every once in a while, I feel an incredible sense of peace because I feel like I am doing what I am supposed to do. And that is what *UNBREAKABLE* is really about—discovering your destiny and asking yourself questions like 'what am I supposed to be doing with my life?'—and how the pieces of your life somehow seem to fall into place and make sense when you find the answer."

Presley Reese



Chris Carter, creator of THE X-FILES at #12, but can he keep the series alive by recasting with Robert Patrick?

finally that he isn't permanently welded to Mulder's and Scully's fates.

13 BRUCE WILLIS

Part-Time Boxoffice Magnet/Full-Time Smart Aleck

(Last year: not ranked)

His great strength: his on-screen presence as an Everyman coping with events beyond the ken of normal humanity. His curse: whenever Bruno shows up to hype the appeal of First Party Boy George W. (demonstrating that Willis handles on-screen afterlives better than real-life politics). He was rightfully praised for the his subtle performance in THE SIXTH SENSE. Let's hope his skills are formidable enough to find new nuance in UNBREAKABLE.

14 DAVID FINCHER

Loose Cannon...and Who'd Have It Any Other Way?

(Last year's ranking: 37)

What are you going to do with this guy? Tell you what you do: you give him a camera and you let him go. His brutally humorous nihilism may be hit (SEVEN) or miss (THE FIGHT CLUB—and we're only talking boxoffice take, here), but for those with the taste for the occasional acid-bath—or lye dusting—his work is the gold-standard.

15 ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER

Not Yet Irrelevant

(Last year's ranking: 30)

The man's on the cusp: can he pull his career from its current tailspin, or is he finally on the glide-path to the Over-Pumped Austrian's Retirement Village? He's already had more revivals than the Terminator (the one from the first movie—the only one that *really* matters); another comeback could be in the offing, but probably only with a filmmaker who knows how to move his mass across the screen. (See James Cameron, above.)

16 JOHN WOO

Imported Action Master

(Last year's ranking: 32)

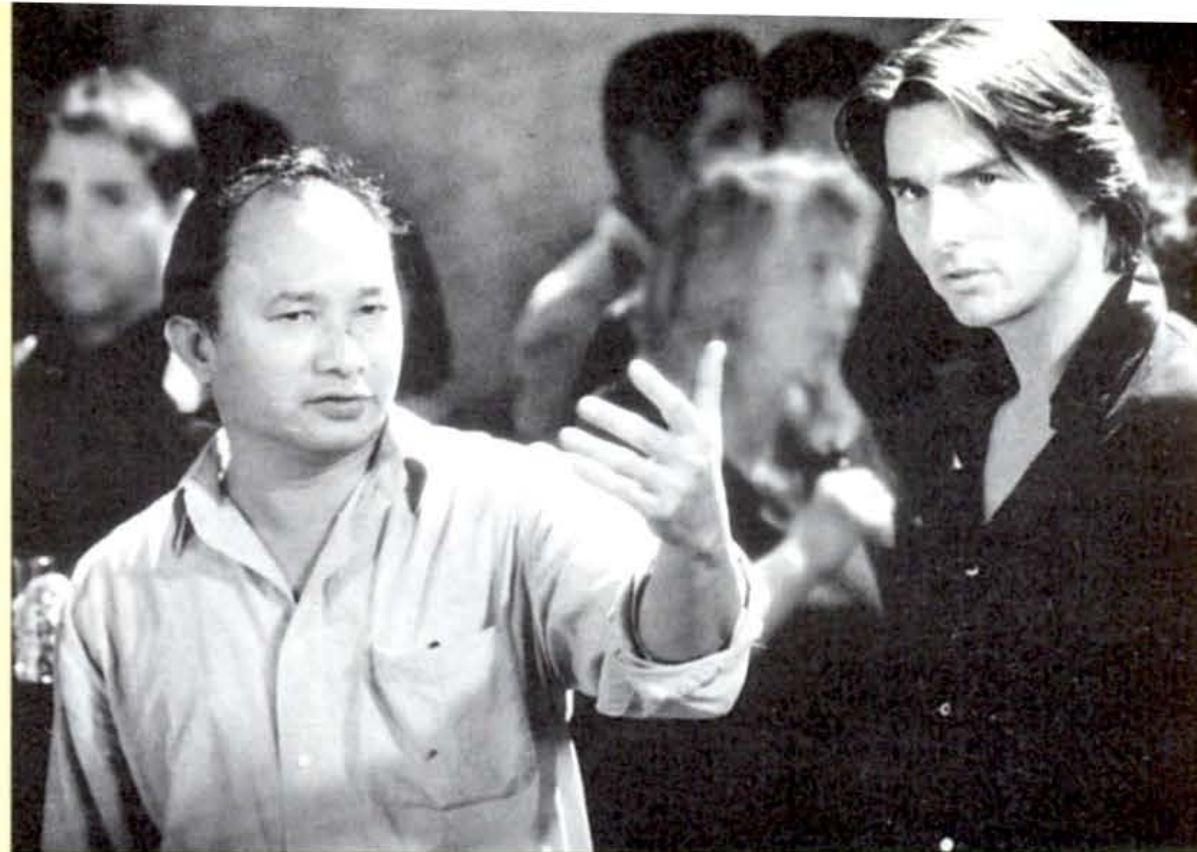
He's still better at balls-out action than most helmers, and that's why he keeps getting the high-profile, Tom Cruise-type gigs. But FACE/OFF wasn't really THE KILLER, and MI2 wasn't really FACE/OFF. It would be nice if he used some of his current throw to work on a film that harkens back to the darker, more soulful, and—dare we say it—lower-budgeted work of his Hong Kong days. That's the stuff that caught our attention in the first place.

17 ROLAND EMMERICH & DEAN DEVLIN

Enthusiastic SF Fans or Genre's Greatest Enemies? You Make the Call.

(Last year's ranking: 13)

GODZILLA was a speed-



Hong Kong action master John Woo at #16, directing Tom Cruise in MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 2, needs to harken back to his darker, more soulful early work.

bump, not the brakes, and THE PATRIOT will probably recoup overseas what it failed to pull in from us unpatriotic Americans (well, at least it prevented George W. from attaching himself, pilot fish-like, to Mel Gibson's side, the way Big Daddy Bush hung off Schwarzenegger). We haven't seen the last of Emmerich and Devlin in the corridors of big-budget genre filmmaking and we're not exactly sure that's a bad thing. They get their digs, all right (and that Siskel and Ebert slap in GODZILLA was a bad call no matter how you look at it), but they also seem to "get" SF more than many people will allow.

18 ROBERT ZEMECKIS

Hollywood's Premiere Humanist Cynic.

(Last year's ranking: 8)

He wasn't Capra, and WHAT LIES BENEATH showed he's not Hitchcock,

either. What he is is a very good filmmaker who in the past few years has been straining perhaps a bit too hard to escape his misanthropic roots. Granted that true Zemeckis was also a dodgy proposition—there was BACK TO THE FUTURE and ROGER RABBIT, true, but there was also DEATH BECOMES HER. Next up is CAST AWAY, which seems to be another attempt to weld the edge to the cuddle. Will it work? Did Tom Hanks win an Oscar for GUMP?

19 RIDLEY SCOTT

Hannibal the Cannibal's Next Wrangler

(Last year: not ranked)

He did with GLADIATOR what he did with BLADE RUNNER: turn it into an event film whose cult will grow even as the rest of the world debates whether or not it was a big deal to begin with. It takes a far-seeing producer to recognize that Rid's power pays off best in the long-run—who thought Dino DeLaurentiis was that kind of visionary?

Director Robert Zemeckis at #18, rehearsing Michelle Pfeiffer and Harrison Ford in the summer shocker WHAT LIES BENEATH, proving he's no Hitchcock.



20 TIM BURTON

The Last, Big-Budget Iconoclast

(Last year's ranking: 44)

SLEEPY HOLLOW was a problematic effort, but then again, *all* of Burton's works are problematic efforts. He keeps pulling down the major budgets because there's something in his style that engenders good will in both the production offices and amongst

audiences—an instinctual recognition, possibly, that the world needs his quirkiness. A Nick Cage-fronted SUPERMAN does indeed sound scary, but face it: you're sorry you'll never get to see what it would have been like.

21 SAM RAIMI

Spiderman! Spiderman! Spiderman!

(Last year's ranking, as Robert Tapert & Sam Raimi: 23)

You don't always get the right director for the right project in Hollywood, but the heavens, the fans, and just about anyone who knows anything about the masked web-slinger smiled when Raimi was given an opportunity to bring Marvel's most beloved superhero to the screen. It still won't be a cake-walk (DARKMAN wasn't perfect either), but God, we should all get this much good-will for the stuff that we do.

22 JOEL SILVER

The Real Peter Dragon

(Last year's ranking: 38)

Even Silver will protest that he's just doing high-profile popcorn-crunchers. Yet, at the very least, his better films—DIE HARD, PREDATOR—are kinked up in ways that amuse those who seek some mental activity with their explosions (and how else could Arnold find his match if not in a badass alien big-game hunter?). At his very best, Silver drives the ball out of the park by throwing weight behind envelope-pushers like THE MATRIX. Faux yahoo he may pretend to be, but better his presence on this list than Bruckheimer's, neh?

23 THOMAS SCHUMACHER

Animated Disney Overlord

(Last year: not ranked)

Fox tried, Warners tried, even freakin' New Line tried. There still remains only one animation studio that rakes the cash in time after time, and it's Schumacher's, as president of Disney Feature Animation, to play with. Even though the

THOMAS SCHUMACHER

The Walt Disney Features Animation President on Mouse House supremacy.

When Thomas Schumacher, President of Walt Disney Feature Animation, joined the studio in 1988, Disney had yet to artistically explode into an all-out Renaissance, that would spawn such phenomenal successes as BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, ALADDIN, THE LION KING and TOY STORY.

Schumacher played a large role in bringing such projects to life, but when asked to reflect on his 12-year journey in animation, he becomes decidedly modest. "No one has a journey alone in the animation business," he said. "You are always traveling with many other people, in lock step, arm-in-arm. The power of collaboration and the joy of seeing people at their best is what this is about."

This mindset is what many say separates Schumacher from other Hollywood studio executives. His ability to nurture the creative process has allowed Disney animation to rise again from the ashes, becoming the entertainment for "all ages,"

Schumacher at #23, the quiet, behind-the-scenes key player in Disney's domination of the animation market.



Schumacher helped to bring boxoffice successes such as TOY STORY, which spawned a sequel, to the big screen since his 1988 start with Disney.

that Walt himself had originally intended.

"When animation moved into the mainstream of filmmaking," noted Schumacher, "we hit a time when animated movies were making between \$100 and \$150 million. Those are clearly legitimate movies that both adults and children are going to."

Before such stratospheric numbers, there was the modest RESCUERS DOWN UNDER (1990). It was with this film that Schumacher joined Disney as a producer and went on to serve as executive producer on 1994's blockbuster, THE LION KING. Following the success of that film, Schumacher was elevated to the role of executive vice president. Before joining Disney, Schumacher spent a decade working in the performing arts, where, among his roles, he was director of the 1987 Los Angeles Festival of Arts and general

assistant manager of the Los Angeles Ballet.

In 1999, Schumacher was promoted to President of Walt Disney Feature Animation, Walt Disney Television Animation and Buena Vista Theatrical Group. In his role, he not only oversees the studio's animated films, including direct-to-video premieres, but also such hit TV shows as DOUG and RECESS and the immensely successful stage productions of BEAUTY AND THE BEAST and LION KING, as well as the Tony Award-winning, AIDA.

In fact, Schumacher sees a close analogy between the Great White Way and the blank animation page. "In theater, you first do a 'workshop,' see what you have and then see how you can change it. Animation is the same way; it's been in the tradition of theater forever. You put up the storyboards and say, 'We need to re-write the third act.' In

live-action filmmaking you don't have that flexibility."

Disney animation has become not only about this flexibility, but also about variety. "If you look at what we've released," said Schumacher, "and compare LION KING to TOY STORY to MULAN to TARZAN, it's a pretty broad range. And among our upcoming films, some are inspired by literature, some are action films, some are comedies. I think that the most important thing we can do when we look forward is to vary our slate."

Up next for Disney is this December's THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE (see page 48). Next summer brings ATLANTIS, from BEAUTY AND THE BEAST and HUNCHBACK directors Kirk Wise and Gary Trousdale. "This is a complete action-adventure," noted Schumacher. "It's more in the tradition of Disney's live-action movies like 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA and SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON." The first Disney animated feature made in 70mm since THE BLACK CAULDRON, ATLANTIS will feature the voices of James Garner and Michael J. Fox, with a style inspired by comic book artist Mike Mignola (HELLBOY).

Disney then joins forces again with Pixar (TOY STORY and A BUGS LIFE) for MONSTERS, INC. Telling the story of monsters whose job it is to scare children at night, the computer-animated film will be directed by Pete Docter and co-directed by David Silverman, with Billy Crystal and John Goodman providing voices, along with some new technological leaps. "This is another great advancement for Pixar," said Schumacher. "In this film, they'll actually be creating feathers and fur for the characters. It's something that will look great in the 3-D world."

Following MONSTERS, INC. is a science fiction variation on Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island, entitled TREASURE PLANET. "John Musker and Ron Clements [directors of ALADDIN and HERCULES] have been interested in this idea for a long time," explained Schu-

“Some of our upcoming films are inspired by literature, some are action, some are comedies,” said Schumacher. “The most important thing we can do is vary our slate.”



Getting it right: THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE, Disney's Christmas attraction, went from epic to comic farce in production.

macher. "They actually first brought it in as an idea back in the early eighties. It's a great adventure story with characters that are vibrant and alive. And, since the story has lasted so long, it has something to say—about independence, friendships, role models. Here, we're setting it in a way that you could only get away with in animation. It's science fiction, but I don't really think of it that way. It takes place in space, but not futuristic space. It's in space as a parallel universe. The entire world is designed, it's invented, and it's not based in history, although it has a historical context. This heightens the story; you see it in a different way. Jim Hawkins, for example, is much more contemporary in this version."

Also on the slate for Disney is LILO & STITCH, which is in production at Disney's Florida studio. It's been called "ET meets THE FUGITIVE," but Schumacher deplored such simplification for the story of a little girl who adopts a dog that turns out to be an alien convict,

that has escaped from its home planet.

"This movie is the brain-child of Chris Sanders," said Schumacher. "He was the head of story for MULAN and also worked on the story for LION KING and BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. LILO AND STITCH [which Sanders is co-directing with Dean DeBlois] is an idea that Chris came up with and he designed all the characters. It's a unique movie. It's an anti-hero story, set in contemporary times, the characters are very fresh and it doesn't follow the form of storytelling that we've done in the past. You'll get to see a real artist's vision up on the screen."

A film called WILD LIFE, which is being produced in conjunction with Disney's CGI studio, "The Secret Lab" (which gave us this year's DINOSAUR), will follow LILO AND STITCH. It's a project that, according to Schumacher, has been in the development arena for a while. All he will say about its plot is that, "It's set in the club scene and is a bit of a Pygmalion story."

Such animated tales travel down a long, winding road to reach the screen. Schumacher dismissed the rumors swirling around the changes made to THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE, noting that such drastic story revisions are commonplace at Disney. "Some of the best stories ever put on the screen were created in the most chaotic way. And, certainly, some of our greatest triumphs haven't been some of our greatest stories. We have, not a luxury, but a responsibility to get it as right as we can. I've been screening some movies that aren't going to come out for three years. It's great to get the chance to see them in their earliest, roughest stages and make substantial changes."

Today, these screenings are just a small part of Schumacher's jam-packed daily schedule, which includes story meetings, video conferences, telephone interviews and even the occasional red-eye flight to New York, to keep up with Disney on Broadway.

Mike Lyons

response to DINOSAUR was lukewarm and THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE will come to the screen as a reportedly troubled production, you know that any other producer would give his/her right arm to have the boxoffice take that both these projects will eventually suck in. And, if time has proven anything, it's that we're only a couple of titles away from the next TARZAN, whatever that may be.

24 LUCY LAWLESS

Badass Barbarian of the Outback

(Last year: not ranked)

For the guys, there's VIP and BAYWATCH. For the gals, there's a barbarian princess who embodies both kick-butt action and the life-force in ways that you don't see dramatized anywhere else in the mass media. Frankly, I think the women are getting the better deal. Lawless hasn't really capitalized on her unique standing—maybe being confined to Oz for the bulk of the filming year keeps her out of play. Still, she shouldn't ignore the potential influence she has on her young fans, both male and female.

25 PATRICK STEWART

Lay On, Picard

(Last year: not ranked)

Shatner was a Shakespearean actor, too. Of course, Shatner hasn't managed to maintain both a career in genre and his rep as a genuinely fine thespian with such aplomb. Measure of Stewart's power? Let's see whether Berman and Braga are still calling the shots on the next TREK feature.

26 CHRIS COLUMBUS

First American Enrollee at Hogwarts

(Last year: not ranked)

No pressure, dude. Warner's just entrusting you with the director's job on HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE, the first, major franchise of the 21st century. Nail it, and you



Keanu Reeves morphs in his break-out hit *THE MATRIX*, with 2 & 3 on the way.

may be creating an instant classic. Blow it and, well, surely Macaulay will take your calls.

27 KEANU REEVES

Wayne's World Dark Knight
(Last year: not ranked)

His dudeness finally did it: made himself a genuine action hero (with just a little help from a couple of off-beat directors and about half-a-gazillion dollars worth of special effects). His is a tenuous position, though. Box-office success for *MATRIX* 2 and 3 will help, but can he portray a character whose main response to life isn't, "Whoa?"

28 BARRY SONNENFELD

Visually Innovative and Sharper Than You Think
(Last year's ranking: 7)

THE WILD WILD WEST was a mistake, that's all: too much budget and too much self-infatuation clogging what should have been a light-hearted revival of a fun concept. He ain't dead yet, and regaining his equilibrium by helming *THE TICK* pilot (what other director could drive this puppy home?) offers hope that he'll be back in form sooner rather than later.

29 SARAH MICHELLE GELLER

Sentry at the Hellmouth
(Last year: not ranked)

Can the Slayer survive when she isn't driving stakes through the hearts of the undead? The jury is out. Right now, she's engaged in an effort to move beyond the comforting environs of genre. The danger: she's come under the wing of James Toback, avatar of self-indulgence. Sarah, honey, ignore his blandishments...and keep your top on!

30 AVI ARAD

Chief Marvel Master
(Last year: not ranked)

Used to be all Roger Corman had to do was throw a fistful of cash at the Marvel

Bruce Campbell, #32, does *DIE HARD* by way of the Three Stooges in Sam Raimi's *ARMY OF DARKNESS*, having fun with TV's *JACK OF ALL TRADES*.



execs and he could take home a superhero to defile in a cheapjack feature. Arad knows better, and the brand name—for all its trouble in the comic shops—never looked healthier on-screen. Even if the Earth reverses rotation and *SPIDER-MAN* somehow doesn't become the icing on the Marvel cake, you can at least rest assured that it isn't going to be Concorde's *FANTASTIC FOUR*. (See page 32.)

31 TREY PARKER & MATT STONE

Cartman's Only Friends
(Last year: not ranked)

They're able to say a hearty "fuck you" to every Hollywood institution and still be embraced by the people they moon (even more impressive: their bratty 'tudes seem to be completely sincere). *SOUTH PARK* has to end sooner or later, and Parker/Stone have yet to come up with anything that suggests they can move beyond it (although *CANNIBAL: THE MUSICAL* does indicate that their skills at the Bizarro musical weren't all blown with *BIGGER, LONGER, AND UNCUT*). They've won a slot on this list just for the way they humbled more than a few of the tight-asses over at the MPAA.

32 BRUCE CAMPBELL

Action Hero for the New Millennium, Nyuck-Nyuck-Nyuck
(Last year: not ranked)

Attaching his name to *any* project is enough to turn a certain sector of fandom (okay, maybe the geekiest sector) into puddles of quivering jelly—q.v. the fren-



The power of sex, Julie Strain, all six feet of her, captures #34, wedded to Heavy Metal mogul Kevin Eastman.

zy that attended the rumor he'd be replacing Duchovny on *THE X-FILES*. Meanwhile, we wish *JACK OF ALL TRADES* was less a collection of smirking double-entendres and more the true rebirth of *WILD, WILD WEST* satire.

33 WES CRAVEN

Freed of Freddy. That's a Good Thing, Right?
(Last year's ranking: 22)

He can do any film he wants, so long as it's a *SCREAM* sequel. Craven has had his bumps and rises before, and no doubt he'll have them again—the big issue is whether he'll finally merge the shrieks people want with the intellectual content he has long craved. (See page 29).

34 JULIE STRAIN

Troma Dominatrix
(Last year: not ranked)

There may be more skilled actresses out there (and ones with healthier voice-over careers—sorry about *HEAVY METAL* 2), but frankly, we're afraid of what she'd do to us if we *didn't* put her on this list.

35 WESLEY SNIPES

Owner of the Stealth Franchise
(Last year's ranking: 25)

People will talk about

TODD MCFARLAND

The creator of Spawn on his true passion, marketing the coolest toys.

No one can say that Todd McFarlane isn't his own man. When the outspoken comic book artist saw his creative license usurped by executives at Marvel Comics, he, and seven others, pulled up stakes. McFarlane started his own comic book company, Image Comics, and created *Spawn*, the crime fighter from the Netherworld. The instant success of the character brought on a merchandising frenzy. But McFarlane wasn't interested. "I just can't seem to get it done the way I see fit," he said, "so I'm forced to start entire companies just to amuse me on what I believe to be decent projects."

As the success of *Spawn* grew, McFarlane, who retained ownership of the copyright and trademarks for the characters, was besieged by companies wanting to make merchandising deals. Several toy manufacturers clamored for license rights, but there was a problem. "they wouldn't allow me to have the control that I wanted over my toys," said McFarlane. "They just wanted to give me money. For all the companies that I own and all the money that I make I don't really care about it. I just want to spread the gospel of ideas. I seem to hit brick walls which are usually corporate entities that have closed minds to a lot of thoughts. The only way you can show them there is another way to solving the problem is to start a company and physically do it. So now I'm in the toy business so I can make cool toys. They wouldn't give me the right in a contract



McFarlane (l) at #44, and his bloody Jason, making the toys that he likes to play with.

to even tell them what a cool toy was. They'd rather give me more money. I want creative control. Now if you want to give me ten billion bucks, then I'll take that because that allows me to now buy your company and fire all you guys and make cool toys."

McFarlane launched his toy company with a line of *Spawn* figures and branched out to include monster sets, movie tie-ins and a bizarre assortment of figures based on the musical group Kiss.

Battling the archaic idea that just because something is based on a comic book or a cartoon, it is meant only for children, McFarlane is out to prove that there is a marketing void that can be filled. "Why can't I make toys for somebody who's 47 years old," he asked. "I believe I can. We do it all day long, but it's usually electronics and they're

very expensive toys. They're just called VCRs and Surround Sound but they're essentially just toys for big people. Ultimately, why can't I make a figure for somebody who's an adult? I just have to pick the right kind of character and pick the right kind of genre and just do it and sell it."

Among the monsters, ogres, cyborg gorillas and *Spawn* variables are a contingent of female figures. First up were Jessica Priest, who sent the movie *SPAWN*'s Al Simmons to an early Hellish grave. Melinda Clarke, who played the character in the *SPAWN* movie, referred to her character as "a classic bad guy in vinyl." Well, the vinyl part is back. The figure comes complete with

two guns, one of which actually shoots water. Another creation, the mystical Skull Queen, is a finely detailed figure that is accompanied by a pair of skeletal minions. The science fiction movie world hasn't been forgotten and McFarlane has produced figures based on the *SPECIES II* and *X-FILES* films.

"Now, am I trying to sell *X-Files* toys to five-year-old kids?," said the artist. "No. I'm trying to sell *X-Files* toys and figures to people who are 32 years old, who are female, who work at the bank and just love that show. What's wrong with having Scully and Mulder on top of your computer? There are enough people pandering to the cute cuddly stuff, we're doing stuff like Freddy Krueger. I don't consider them toys. I consider them plastic statues."

Dan Scapperotti

Harrison Ford as Indy or Pierce Brosnan as Bond. Meanwhile, how many have bothered to notice that Snipes made the ultra-cool vampire hunter *Blade* his very own? The series may be just a blip on the boxoffice radar in comparison to *THE X-MEN*, but if the sequel is as successful within its modest expectations as the first film, then the man has locked himself down his own, respectable little franchise to turn to when needed.

36 ALAN BURNETT & PAUL DINI

Cel Masters of Gotham's Dark Knight
(Last year: not ranked)

If anyone in Hollywood understands Batman, it's these two guys. We're genuinely torn: still pulling for Darren Aronofsky and his bid for *BATMAN 5* (see page 48) while licking our lips over the news that Burnett and Dini have been asked to script (with director Boaz Yakin) a live-action *BATMAN BEYOND*.

With this much talent arrayed around one franchise, Warners should just throw in the towel and become all Batman, all the time.

37 DAVID KOEPP ↑

High Concept Scribe
(Last year's ranking: 71)

So young, so many powerhouse titles: the *JURASSIC PARK*s, *MISSION IMPOSSIBLE*, *MEN IN BLACK*. Sure, Raimi is seeking a rewrite on *SPIDERMAN* and there are such misfires as *THE TRIGGER EFFECT* and *SNAKE EYES*, but this is still the man to call when a boxoffice-friendly script is needed (sorry, Mr. Esterhas).

38 J. GROSSFELD, ALFRED R. KAHN, THOMAS J. KENNEY

Pokemasters, Western Division
(Last year: not ranked)

Maybe it was just being in the right place at the right time, but



Alan Burnett (l) and Paul Dini (seated) at #36, scripting the live-action **BATMAN BEYOND**, with artists David Karoll and Felipe Morell, animating **BATMAN**.

turn to when they want a GULLIVER'S TRAVELS or an ARABIAN NIGHTS brought to the screen with wit and class. Magic touches sometimes have the ability to wax and fade—with LAND OF OZ, SNOW WHITE, and the hotly awaited DINO-TOPIA on the way, here's hoping that Halmi will soon demonstrate a revival of his powers.

43 TOM CRUISE

Now Can We Get an Interview?

(Last year's ranking: 23)

He would, at first blush, seem to have negative genre power: MI2 didn't quite get the props from SF fans, and EYES WIDE SHUT was too studied a fantasy to con even usually-susceptible critics. But MINORITY REPORT is on-deck, and blending Cruise's star power with that of Spielberg's maintains his spot on the list. LEGEND must seem a long way off.

44 TODD MCFARLANE

God of Ancillary Rights

(Last year: not ranked)

The SPAWN franchise may currently be on life-support, but the man's true power lies in the fact there may not be an actor in Hollywood who doesn't want to see him/herself rendered as an exquisitely detailed, McFarlane Toys action figure.

45 J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI

Babylon 6?

(Last year: not ranked)

Neo-Roddenberry, with

41 STANLEY KUBRICK

Proof of an Afterlife

(Last year: not ranked)

DePalma rips off 2001 for MISSION TO MARS. Spielberg puts all other projects on hold to direct AI. The guy's been dead for a year and he still throws more weight than most living filmmakers. Now that's power.

42 ROBERT HALMI SR.

By the Book (as in Classics) Producer

(Last year: not ranked)

The bloom is off the Briar Rose in terms of the sweeps-winning potential of fantasy mini-series (and, honestly, the whole of THE TENTH KINGDOM should have been as vivid as its opening credits). But there's still only one man the networks can

Peter Lord (r) at #47 with co-director Nick Park, sets up an aerial brace shot on their stop-motion hit CHICKEN RUN, with key animator Merlin Crossingham (l).



this trio of executive producers saw the potential of POKEMON, and have been rewarded with marketing gold that has flowed longer than anyone could imagine. The weak boxoffice of POKEMON 2000 suggests that the powerhouse may be losing its juice (cuddly electric mice notwithstanding), but the fact that kid-vid slots are now overflowing with anime demonstrates the impact these men have had on 21st-century television.

39 MATT GROENING

Now Living Life in Hel... 'Scuse me...Hollywood

(Last year: not ranked)

Binky who? THE SIMPSONS moves on to year 11, and the whispers about a feature film version have recently turned into a low roar. FUTURAMA isn't quite a home-run, yet it's been more successful in milking SF satire than anyone anticipated. More important, he's a die-hard liberal in the heart of News Corp. Anyone who can get Rupert Murdoch to sit still for that is a mighty powerful gent, indeed.

40 FRANK MILLER

Gotham City Renovator

(Last year: not ranked)

Yeah, okay, his last billed script was ROBOCOP 2 (trust me, what wound up on screen wasn't anywhere near what had been placed on the page). But his name has been connected with BATMAN 5—allegedly an adaptation of his *Batman: Year One* graphic novel. Given that this was the man who got



David Duchovny at #46, bowing out of THE X-FILES where he showed a flair for his work behind the camera.

more legitimate SF cred than the Great Bird ever had. It's only potential power now, but let him start in on a new project and just watch the talk-backs at *Ain't It Cool News* overflow.

46 DAVID DUCHOVNY

The Next Orson Welles—Take That as You Will

(Last year: not ranked)

Okay, smart guy, you're a fine actor, you're handsome in an irresistibly accessible way, you show genuine potential as a writer-director, and you get everything you pretty much ask for on THE X-FILES. Still, the ghost of David Caruso haunts you, making it all the harder to break out. Be smart, take your time, think carefully, and for God's sake, don't preen too much on the talk shows.

47 PETER LORD & NICK PARK

Who Knew Playing with Mud Would Pay Off So Handsomely?

(Last year's ranking: 65)

We frankly go for Aardman's edgier stuff (of late, that would be the ANGRY KID shorts on the AtomFilms web site), but Park/Lord's Wallace and Grommit specials and the CHICKEN RUN feature



Director Peter Jackson, shepherding **LORD OF THE RINGS** after stumbling at horror on **THE FRIGHTENERS**.

demonstrate how a very British cuddliness and an understated, satirical wit can serve as healthy counterpoint to Disney's show-biz slickness. On that count alone, they're probably guaranteed a long stint at Katzenberg's DreamWorks. Now can they come up with something more marketable than toothy chickens?

48 BARBARA BROCCOLI

Bondage Mistress

(Last year's ranking, as Barbara Broccoli & Michael Wilson: 11)

Blood is thicker than popcorn butter. The Bond series remains MGM's only moneymaker, and Albert's progeny still firmly holds the reins of the franchise. She's survived tired series blood before—when this current run poops out (probably a couple of episodes from now) will she be able to rejuvenate the series one more time?

49 ALEX PROYAS

Absentee Visionary

(Last year's ranking: 53)

MIA since **DARK CITY** (although he did script the upcoming **10TH VICTIM**), and that's interesting. You don't create the most visually riveting film of a particular

year without raising expectations of what you'll do next. The power is his—which may be why he's taking so long to figure out what to do with it.

50 MAJEL BARETT-RODDENBERRY

Hatching the Great Bird's Final Few Eggs

(Last year: not ranked)

Yoko, oh no? Hard-core fans may bristle at the way Gene's widow has capitalized on his name with the likes of **EARTH: FINAL CONFLICT** and **ANDROMEDA**. But give Majel her due: who wouldn't rather spend extended hours with **FINAL CONFLICT**'s Taelons over five minutes with V's rat-munchers?

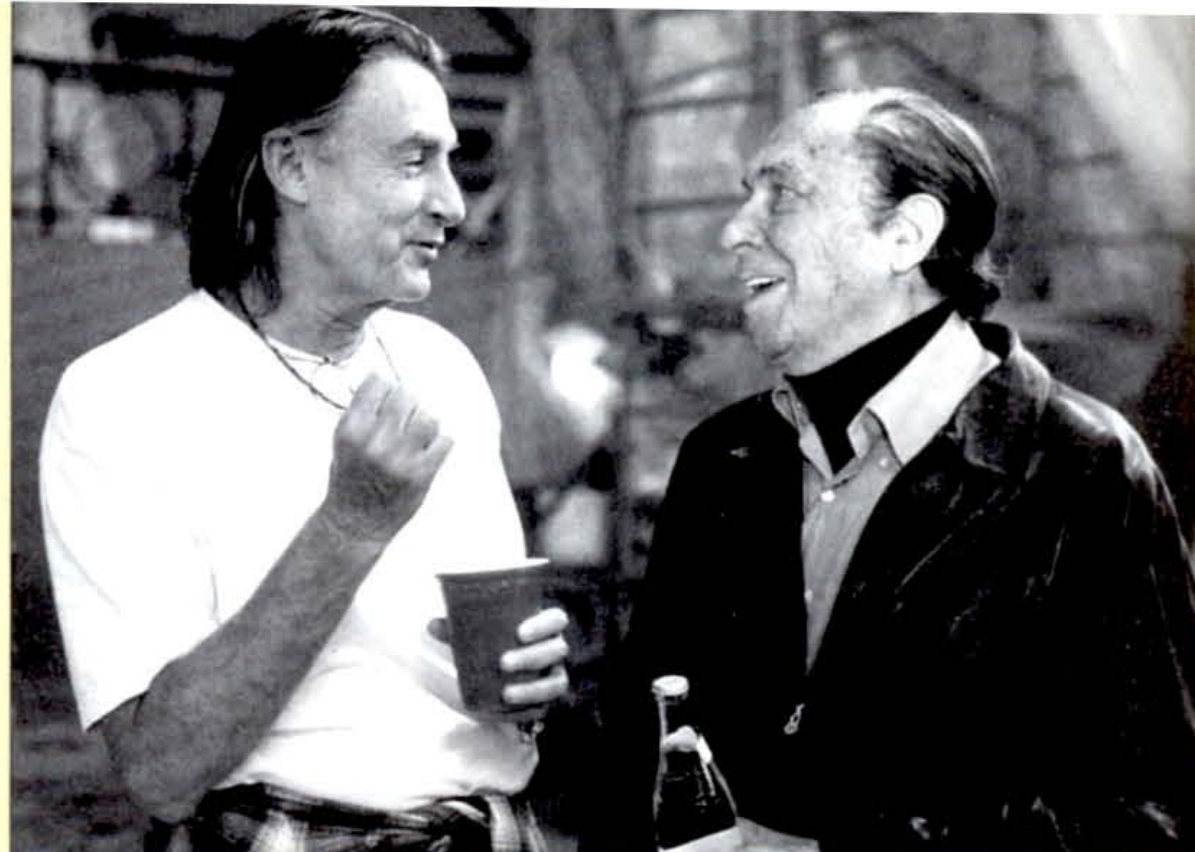
THE ONES TO WATCH

DARREN ARONOFSKY

He will be directing the next **BATMAN**, and he's already scripted **PROTEUS**, the new David Twohy film over at Dimension. Frankly, we wonder whether the same execs who tapped Chris Columbus for **HARRY POTTER** will really let so (brilliantly) visceral a director loose on the Dark Knight, as smart a move as that may be. All we can say is: Darren, now that you got the gig, dig in, and blow us away.

HAYDEN CHRISTENSEN

Vader has a face, and it's gotta



Director Joel Schumacher with the late **Batman** creator Bob Kane, now thankfully out of the job of running Warner Bros **BATMAN** movie franchise.

be better than the one owned by the pint-sized mannequin who turned up in **EPISODE 1**. This of course could be the launch pad to a healthy, high profile career, or a complete dead-end—a fate not entirely in Mr. Christensen's control. Still, we can't imagine that Christensen's agent won't be working the phones furiously between the end of principal photography and the summer of '02.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO

We're *still* waiting for his **MEMORIES**, and anticipating how the creator and director of the landmark anime **AKIRA** will play out his deal with DreamWorks. This could finally be the landmark western/eastern animation crossover that fans have been waiting for, presuming Cameron doesn't release his anime crossover first, or the Wachowski's don't rush out their **MATRIX** anime.

PETER JACKSON

Quirky sixties cult trilogy **LORD OF THE RINGS** in the hands of quirky nineties cult director Jackson? Has potential, and may allow Jackson to rejuvenate a career that stumbled after **THE FRIGHTENERS**. If he can hit marks that meld the vicious humor of **DEAD ALIVE** with the fevered intensity of **HEAVENLY CREATURES**, he may well come up with a film to please commercial and artistic audiences alike. Let's just hope he keeps the **MEET THE FEEBLES** moments to a minimum.

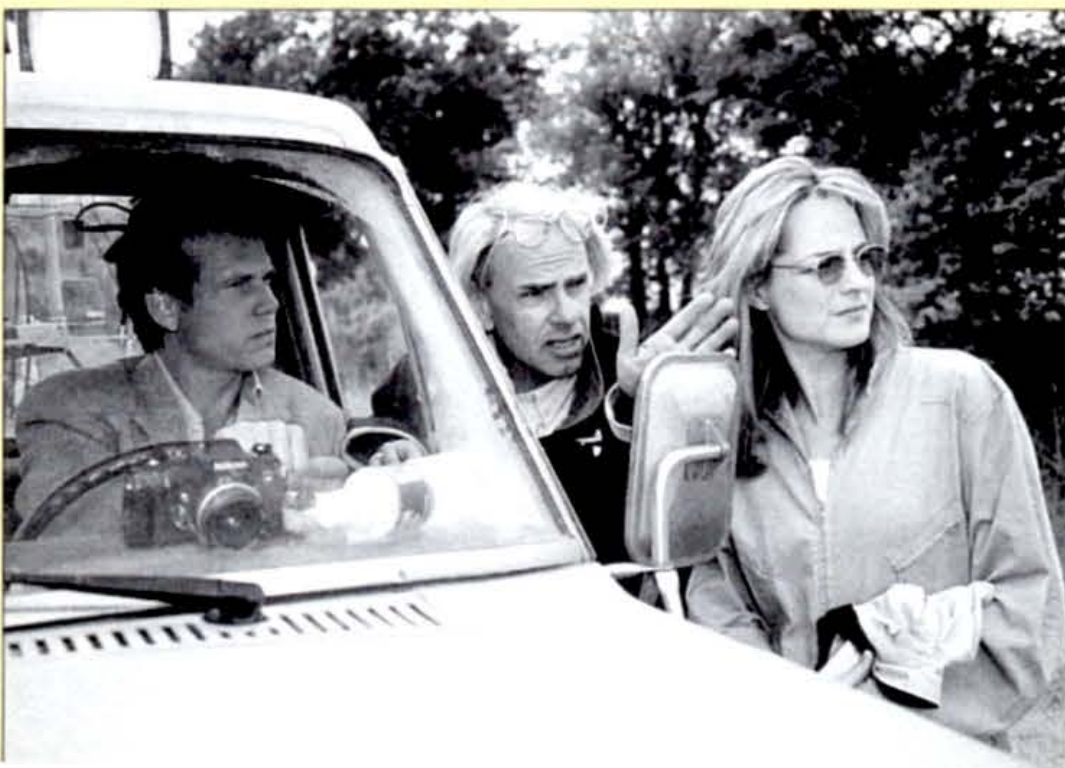
BRAD BIRD

"FOOLS!" filmgoers cried as Warner Bros. seriously botched the theatrical and video releases of **THE IRON GIANT**. Bird survived, though. Better than survived: he packed his bags and moved on over to Pixar. Warners' animation studio is now on the critical list, while the house that Lasseter built is accumulating enough hip, intelligent talent to make it the New Termite Terrace.

ON THE OUTS

JOEL SHUMACHER

Bless his heart, he's doing smaller, more personal films. The notices are mixed, but at least we no longer have to listen to his plans for **BATMAN 5**.



Director Jan DeBont rehearses Bill Paxton and Helen Hunt, filming **TWISTER**, a kinetic camera master who made a poor choice of material in **THE HAUNTING**.

DON BLUTH

It isn't completely his fault. TITAN A.E. was a decent adventure with one certified, blowout sequence (that chase in the ice rings). But decent doesn't cut it when the current regime is betting on you to pull out a summer hit. Not surprisingly, as soon as Bill Mechanic bowed out, Bluth's life-support was pulled. Pray that this is only temporary.

RICK BERMAN & BRANNON BRAGA

The fans hate you. You've courted the wrath of Stewart and Spiner (Data, no!). Your VOYAGER plots are so derivative that it's as if the entire series is trapped in one of the space/time anomalies you're so fond of resorting to. All your proposals for the next TREK series are on hold. Time to move on and let a new guard boldly go where no one has gone before.

KEVIN WILLIAMSON

Admittedly, events—and more critical praise than may have been healthy—overwhelmed him. The fast track can kill if you're not ready for it, and after SCREAM and DAWSON'S CREEK there was...what? TEACHING MRS. TINGLE? That ABC series that lasted all of one week...what was its name? This is not a dumb man—he may just need to pull back for the time it takes to reacquaint himself with his strengths.

JAN DE BONT

Dear Mr. de Bont: We're sorry. We made a mistake. We noted the modest pleasures of SPEED and thought we had found a director who could deploy the heady rush of kinetic filmmaking with the intelligence and wit of a Cameron or a Miller. As of TWISTER and THE HAUNTING, we've realized our error. Please go back to your camera, and forget that these past six years ever happened. God knows, we're trying to. □

DARREN ARONOFSKY

After directing REQUIEM FOR A DREAM, he takes over in Gotham City.

On a list of up-and-coming power people in Sci-Fi and Horror, Darren Aronofsky would have to be near the top. In 1998, the 29-year-old Harvard graduate surprised audiences with his low-budget indie debut, π . He followed that up with the utterly disturbing REQUIEM FOR A DREAM. Currently, he is writing a big-budget science-fiction/fantasy script that he will be developing for a major actor. But in what is perhaps the biggest news of all, Aronofsky has also been offered a chance to take the reigns of the BATMAN film franchise [though he has yet to sign on to the project].

"My pitch was to actually turn [BATMAN] into a '70s film," Aronofsky revealed. "Sort of a DEATH WISH-FRENCH CONNECTION meets BATMAN. We're trying to make it work."

The new BATMAN, which Warners wants to do in addition to a live-action BATMAN BEYOND, would be co-written with DARK KNIGHT scribe Frank Miller. He has also been working with Aronofsky on a film version of Miller's comic RONIN. Unfortunately, Aronofsky said RONIN has been put into turnaround, but he is hopeful that it will eventually hit movie screens. "Eventually, we may go to Warner Brothers again if we can find the right take on [RONIN]," Aronofsky explained. "We struggled with trying to figure out how to turn it into a live-action film."

Another comic book adaptation Aronofsky is trying to bring to the big screen is PROTEUS. This property may be the closest



Aronofsky, just 31, made a splash with π and is now poised to take over the BATMAN franchise at Warner Bros with Frank Miller.

to starting production. As of this writing, Aronofsky was awaiting delivery of a new script. David Twohy (PITCH BLACK) has been hired to direct and do a rewrite on the screenplay. Aronofsky and his partner Eric Watson will produce the film for Dimension Films. "I'm hoping that [Twohy] is going to shoot that in the Fall [2000]," Aronofsky said.

The Protozoa partners also recently bought the rights to make a live-action adaptation of the highly acclaimed Japanese anime film PERFECT BLUE. It is in the early stages, but Aronofsky and Watson see it as a medium budget picture (\$8-to-\$15 million). "We're doing some initial development on it," Aronofsky said. "It's something for me to produce and maybe for me to direct."

Having said that he would like to juggle writing and directing films both independently

and for the big studios, the Brooklyn-born Aronofsky would seem to be priming himself as a young John Sayles. His new film is REQUIEM FOR A DREAM, a harrowing surrealistic drama based on the dark novel of addiction by Hubert Selby Jr. Though the film is strictly an arthouse picture that does not appear likely to strike a chord with mainstream audiences, it is another strong example of the writer/director's dazzling potential.

REQUIEM follows four characters in Coney Island through three seasons: summer, fall and winter. All become entangled with drugs and after the narcotics initially lead them toward their dreams, they begin a frightening descent into addiction. Ellen Burstyn stars as an aging woman who goes on a pill-popping weight purge after receiving a call to appear on her favorite game show. Jared Leto plays her son, a casual speedball user who concocts a plot to sell a highly potent cut of heroin with his pal, played by Marlon Wayans. Jennifer Connelly co-stars as Leto's girlfriend, a junkie who has lost the cash support of her wealthy father, forcing her into occasional flings with her seedy therapist (Sean Gullette from π).

"In some ways, I like to look at it as modern horror," Aronofsky said of REQUIEM. "Addiction is this monster. It wasn't a physical monster you could actually see, it was only a monster that lived in their heads. But still, every scene that monster was in, it started to take over."

Patrick Legare

The CROW

By Michael Beeler

After test screenings by Miramax's Dimension Films in Sacramento and San Antonio last July, *THE CROW: SALVATION*, the third entry in the movie series based on James O'Barr's horror comic, gets dumped on video shelves January 2. Directed by Bharat Narulli, the London-based director of *KILLING TIME* and *DOWNTIME*, the film stars Kirsten Dunst and Eric Mabius, as the new CROW.

Dunst, who made her debut as a child vampire in 1994 in *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*, is actually top-billed on the film, at 16 on the cusp of teen stardom. She said she took the role of Erin in *CROW 3*, based on the script by Chip Johnansson. Noted Dunst, "Usually girls in films, especially these kinds of films, where there is a lot of action, don't deal with much. But Erin kicks butt in the film. She doesn't stand back and just watch. I like that about her character a lot. It was a difficult role because she's dealing with her sister's death."

"She's a lonely girl when she meets The Crow and helps him avenge her sister's death. She comes to learn about love and she also becomes much more of a tougher girl, who's independent and you see that she's a stronger person at the end."

Dunst was also attracted to this project when she learned that writer James O'Barr's original storyline of *THE CROW* was born out of the tragic loss of his fiancée in an accident caused by a drunk driver. Dunst was equally interested in working with Narulli, making his American directing debut on the film.

"When I first heard the story of *THE CROW* and how the writer first came up with this whole idea, it really touched me," explained Dunst. "I really wanted to be a part of it. I loved Bharat, the director. I knew that I really wanted to work with him. It was just so appealing, everything together."

salvation

Third time isn't the charm, as sequel III goes direct-to-video.



Teen star Kirsten Dunst as Erin, aided by Eric Mabius as the new Crow, avenging the murder of her sister, hits video shelves January 2 from Miramax.

er."

Even though Dunst said she was endeared to the backstory of *THE CROW*, she never read any of the original *Crow* comics or saw the films *THE CROW* and *THE CROW II: CITY OF ANGELS* or watched the television series *THE CROW: STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN*.

"I didn't want to see them before I did the movie," Dunst said of the earlier movies and TV show. "I never get a chance to watch TV. I'm too busy."

Dunst was pleased with the chemistry

she developed with Mabius, as the Crow. "Every time I worked with him, it was so intense," she said. "His eyes are amazing to look at. I think he expresses so much with his eyes in this film. He's got a very good air about him, a kind of mystery man. His eyes are very powerful. I think that he's a very good actor."

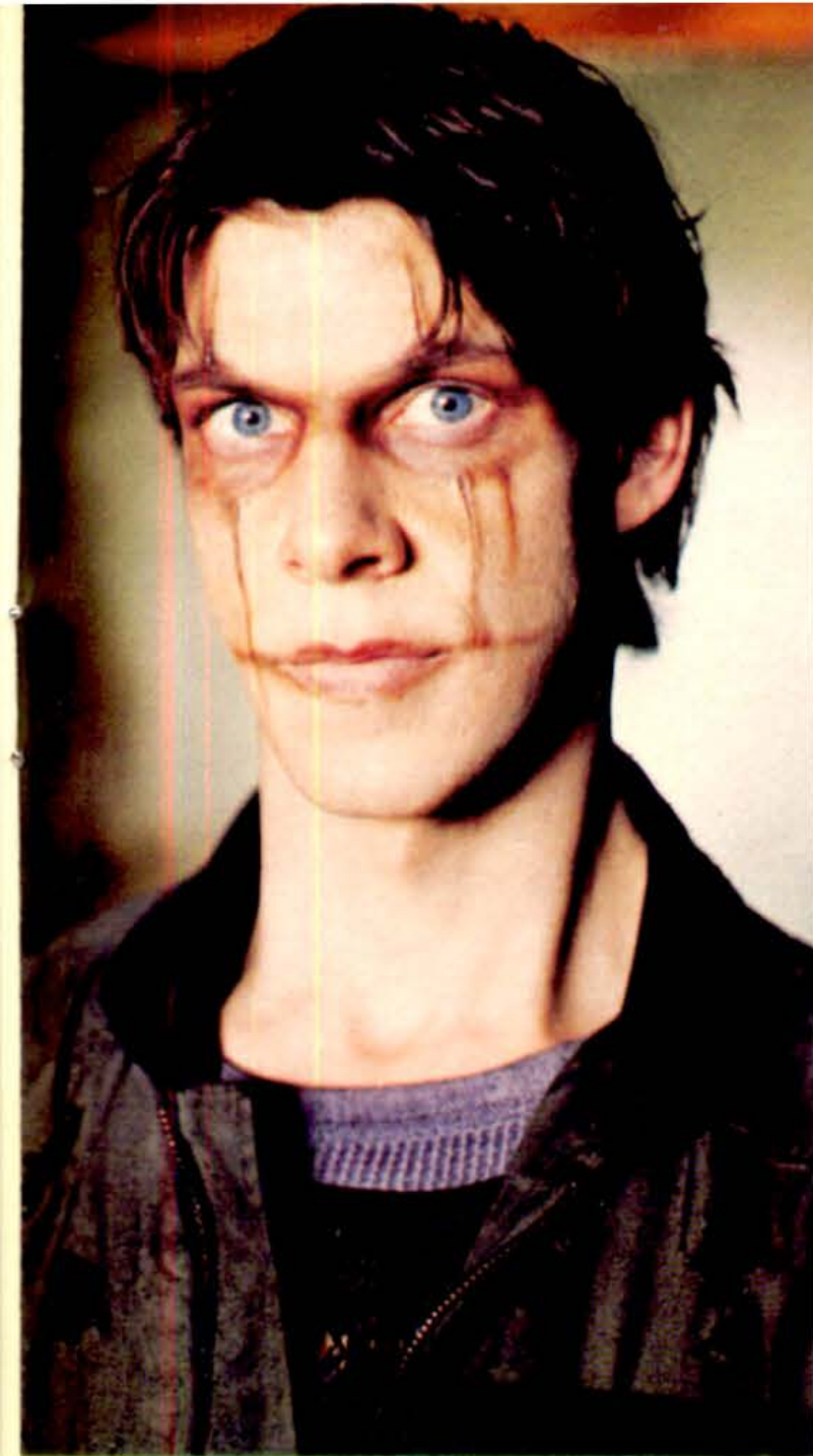
Mabius was also very much taken in by his time with Dunst. "My scenes with Kirsten were really powerful and resonate," said Mabius. "I think Kirsten's the most talented actress I've known, certainly at her age. And that's the thing that excites me."

SALVATION was shot mostly on location in various spots in and around Salt Lake City, which serves as the backdrop for anywhere-smalltown USA. Remaining true to the darkness of the first film, the production shot a lot of footage at night, which demanded long hours and late nights from the cast and crew, which developed a family atmosphere.

"We would just talk and just have fun together," said Dunst. "I loved hanging around the set. Everyone was so sweet. When you're home shooting in Los Angeles, I don't think you become as close to people. But when you are in a place you don't really know, you get closer with the people you work with. We just talked about everything, life."

Dunst is openly excited that she is now being allowed to do films where she is being cast as a young adult and seemed to honestly relish the horrific action called for in the film's script. "I get to fry this guy we put in an electric chair," she said, with a great deal of glee. "I get to pull the plug. I get to use a gun. My character is not like a girl who just sits there and lets stuff happen to her. She actively tries to get out of whatever she can. I stab people. I don't just sit back and watch."

Dunst also enjoyed the romance of her relationship with the Crow, which serves as a



Mabius as the Crow in makeup by KNB Efx. The film goes direct-to-video after unsuccessful theatrical tests by Miramax's Dimension Films.

contrast to the film's darkness and violence. "Oh my kissing scenes?" said Dunst, as she lightly giggled. "It was so short for me, it wasn't a big deal. It was a good kiss though."

Talented, thoughtful, exuberant, innocent and yet wise beyond her years, Dunst is growing up in one of the toughest professions around, learning to put in endless hours, approaching her future with a great deal of insight and intelligence. "It is tough to juggle everything," said Dunst, about her busy schedule. "But I love it so much and I'm not ready to take a break yet. I think that I'm going to do college over the computer because you can do that now. I'm going to do writing courses. I don't know yet what I want to study. I haven't decided. I have no clue. Definitely not film or anything like that. Definitely literature or something like that."

"I'd like to continue acting but I'd also like to start up a production company. My mom really wants to produce, too. So, I think that we're going to start one together and produce films. Really good films. I really want to direct someday. I want to write my own scripts too. I want to make really good roles for women."

Although Dunst is not sure if she would do another CROW film, she was certain that she would love to see The Crow undergo a change of gender. "I think that they should make a girl Crow, too," she said. "I think that would be really cool." □

CROW

makeup design

KNB Efx on being hamstrung by a production playing it safe.

By Michael Beeler

Makeup effects gurus Howard Berger and Alex Diaz of KNB Efx were responsible for creating the execution mask, that scars The Crow's face when he is unjustly put to death by means of an electric chair in THE CROW: SALVATION.

"We did a lot of conceptual art work for the electrocution mask," said Berger. The biggest hurdle was trying to figure why The Crow makeup looks the way it looks. They explain in the first film and I think in the second film why he looked like he looked. But we weren't able to come up with a reason why. We finally figured the scars would stem from the electrocution mask. So we incorporated these little lines that would make those burns and give us the final look.

"There was actually a lot of art work on this show that we did. An unusual amount. We did an electrocution design for Fred Ward at the end of the film. We built this puppet body that they could light on fire and spark, while it was kicking and screaming. It was similar to what we did on THE GREEN MILE. It was an animatronic cable operated puppet that was mounted to the electric chair that they built on set. We were doing puppeteering as well as the makeup effects."

The drawings, all done by Diaz, highlighted a number of other makeup effects KNB created for this film. Arm scarring effects were created for Ward's ruthless cop character. They developed a very sparse effect for scenes in which Kirsten Dunst's



Designs by KNB's Alex Diaz to explain the Crow's look as a result of his execution in the electric chair.



lead character has her mouth sewn up. And they also designed a full-sized graveyard statue of Jodi Lyn O'Keefe's character to mark her final resting place in the movie.

Originally slated to create a large bevy of effects, KNB's contribution was eventually scaled-down in order to accommodate the limited \$10 million budget. "This was really the director's first jaunt into a makeup effects-related production," said Berger. "I kept throwing out ideas and the director, Bharat Narulli, kept saying, 'Yeah! Yeah! That'll be great!' Then I submitted the budget and the producers cried, 'What the Hell! Are you drunk?'"

Of The Crow's look, Berger noted that "Ed Pressman, the executive producer wanted to see something different. So we did a bunch of varia-

tions and they said, 'No, no, no. It's too much! It's too much!'" Constraints from James O'Barr's original illustrations in The Crow comic books and a desire to not alienate a certain segment of the audience too much drove most of the producers' hesitation to approach any extreme change.

Berger's original suggestion was to shave The Crow's head for the execution. "But they nixed that because they didn't think having a bald head was very appealing to the girls in the audience," said Berger. "I thought that was a strong design idea. So they went with Eric's natural hair." Dunst's sewn mouth effect was also toned-down because the producers wanted to keep her pretty and didn't want a lot of makeup effects distorting her skin or lips too much. □

The Emperor's New Groove

Disney's animated feature film laugh riot was anything but.

By Mike Lyons

Troubled Production. In Hollywood, those two words are like a virus that can attach themselves to a healthy movie, activate the negative rumor mill and essentially kill the film before it reaches theatres.

Disney's latest animated feature, *THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE* (in theaters December 15th) was a victim of the "Troubled Production Virus." However, those involved with the film want to assure everyone that rumors of its death were greatly exaggerated. In fact, it feels just fine.

"It's frustrating that things leak out," said producer Randy Fullmer. "It's as if an artist decides to work on a painting for five days and someone comes along and critiques it on day one." He also added, "The first two years we were working on this film, people were pouring out their hearts and souls, trying to make a good movie. We eventually just took a step back and said, 'We are really on the wrong track.'"

Here's how it played out: In 1994, Disney began development on a dramatic epic film entitled *KINGDOM OF THE SUN*. Rooted in pre-Columbian legend, the film was to feature all of the traditional Disney animated elements—the hero, the love interest, the villain, the sidekick—as well as several fa-



Kuzco, the self-centered Emperor of the title, voiced by David Spade, remained, even as grand epic morphed into cartoony comedy.

miliar song archetypes—the ballad, the showstopper, the comedy song.

What was different about *KINGDOM* was that it was going to be set in a specific time period, which turned out to be not only its major ambition, but also its major downfall. "One day, literally, we had an argument about whether it was right to put a wheel in the movie," remembered Fullmer. "The Spanish were the ones who brought over the wheel [to South America] and since the Spanish hadn't arrived yet, could we really have a cart with a wheel on it? At the end of that day, we realized that we were heading in the

wrong direction."

"It never quite clicked," admitted *EMPEROR*'s director Mark Dindal, who last helmed *CATS DON'T DANCE* for Turner Feature Animation. Dindal began as co-director on *KINGDOM* with *LION KING*'s Roger Allers, who has since moved on to another project. "Each time we tried to work out a problem [Walt Disney Pictures President] Peter Schneider and [Feature Animation President] Thomas Schumacher would ask us to think outside the box—think broader strokes, not just little changes. Finally, we came to a point where we decided to think beyond where we were."

In 1998, with the entire film storyboarded, dialogue and music recorded and more than a third of it animated, a somewhat drastic decision was made—shut down *KINGDOM OF THE SUN* and take it in a completely new direction. The story was given a complete overhaul, only two characters were carried over and song after song was jettisoned. Slowly, this traditional epic morphed into a cartoony comedy that eventually warranted a title change to *THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE*.

Fullmer noted, "It's now more like Eric Clapton's 'Unplugged.' We said, 'Let's just strip it out, give it a very clean, graphic look and turn it into more of a character piece.'"

Set in a fictional, mythical



Devious diva Yzma and Kronk.

South American kingdom, at an unspecified time, *THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE* now tells the tale of Kuzco, a self-centered Emperor, who blithely fires his scheming advisor, the "devious diva," Yzma. With her sidekick, the dimwitted, surfer-dude-like Kronk, Yzma plans revenge in the form of poison. Thanks to Kronk's bungling, however, Kuzco drinks not a deadly potion, but a brew that transforms him into a llama. Kuzco the llama, is stranded in the jungle, where he is befriended by a kind-hearted peasant named Pacha, who helps the once-emperor-now-llama return to the throne.

By the time this storyline was put into play, word had leaked out that a Disney animated feature was in trouble and in this age of the Internet, anyone with a computer and modem was quick to comment. The "Troubled Production Virus" was airborne and soon infected *THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE*.

For those on the inside who knew that the film was finally beginning to work, watching these rumors swirl became increasingly frustrating. "These movies are meant to be pliable and meant to be changed," said Tony Bancroft (co-director of *MULAN*) who served as supervising animator for Kronk. "It takes time, in animation, to really work over the story. We work with a very limited time frame, where we're telling pretty epic



Begun in 1994 as **KINGOM OF THE SUN**, Disney switched gears in 1998.

ANIMATOR NICK RANIERI

“This is not your typical Disney feature. This is smaller, like a **DUMBO. It’s full of personality, plenty of humor and heart. It goes where few animated films have gone before.”**

tales in 80 minutes. Sometimes it’s like putting the genie back in the bottle.”

“A lot of what happened was very normal in the process of making an animated film,” said Bruce Smith, a versatile animator, who last animated Kerchak, the patriarch gorilla in **TARZAN** and supervised Pacha in **EMPEROR**. “It’s just never been captured on the Internet like this before. But, from our point of view, this was all very natural and wasn’t all that alarming.”

Noted Nick Ranieri, another of the studio’s multi-talented animators with **POCAHONTAS**’ Meeko, **HERCULES**’ Hades and now **EMPEROR**’S Kuzco to his credit, “This is something that’s not your typical Disney feature. This is a smaller picture, sort of like a **DUMBO**. It’s full of personality, plenty of humor and there’s still heart in it. It takes chances and goes where few animated films, that we’ve ever done, have gone before.”

This smaller scale means that **EMPEROR** has a smaller cast. With the exception of some minor supporting roles, the four characters of Kuzco, Pacha, Yzma and Kronk support the entire film (compared to last year’s **TARZAN**, which had eight major characters).

This makes **THE EMPEROR’S NEW GROOVE** an animator’s movie, as the artists have more room than usual to craft personalities. “The hu-

mor in this movie stems from who the characters are,” said Dindal. “There were opportunities on this film for the animators to bring unique qualities to the acting.”

For Nick Ranieri, this meant bringing these qualities to a character that has both two and four legs, in the same film! This, however, wasn’t the animator’s biggest hurdle. For Ranieri, the challenging part was making the role of a self-centered, spoiled emperor not too grating for audiences.

“We did struggle over likability,” he said. “A few scenes were cut early on, because many felt that Kuzco was too nasty. The idea being that the more nasty he is at the beginning, the more of a personality change that he goes through.”

To get this just right, Ranieri had to animate one sequence three times before it got ap-

proval. Another section, dubbed the “maiden scene,” became a source of debate during production. “In one scene, Kuzco is checking out his potential brides,” explained Ranieri. “As he walks past this line of girls he’s saying, ‘Hate your hair!’ ‘Hate your face!’ ‘Yikes!’ And all the girls are pretty, so it was showing what a jerk he is, but some people got really offended by it. I thought, ‘Of course you’re supposed to be offended, he’s an idiot!’”

The scene did get laughs, but still was about to be cut, until it was screened for Michael Eisner, who felt it should stay in the film. “Ah, Michael, I owe him a lot,” laughed Ranieri. “He suggested James Woods for Hades and now this.” Adding the perfect tone for Kuzco’s smugness is the smirking voice of comedian David Spade (TV’s **JUST SHOOT ME**). Noted Ranieri, “He had one of these voices that, when you listen to it, you’d just get an idea of what to do with the scene.”

As Kuzco’s polar opposite, the selfless peasant, Pacha, the filmmakers cast John Goodman, whose unique form of deadpan humor proved to be the perfect way to offset Spade’s smarmy performance. “We taped certain recording sessions,” said the character’s ani-

mator, Bruce Smith. “We would study those and see exactly what John Goodman brought to that character, in the form of facial expressions, subtle acting, that would enhance the character’s mannerisms. We analyzed them over and over, really trying to dissect what would make this character interesting.”

For this buddy movie to work, like any Disney animated film, **EMPEROR** needed a grand villain and this film has one that may rank with some of the studio’s most popular. Yzma, with her eye on Kuzco’s empire, is a high-camp break from the more ruthlessly serious villains seen in Disney’s recent films. “We wanted a character who had evil intent, but also had some redeeming and charming qualities,” said Fullmer. “She, like the other characters in the film, is going along her own path, based on her own obsessions.”

For Yzma’s supervising animator, Dale Bear, the trick was to make sure that this villainess didn’t recall another in the Disney canon. “There was a fear that she was a little too close to Cruella DeVil,” said Bear. “But, I think that Yzma stands out on her own.”

Helping to distinguish the character is the voice of Tony, Emmy and Grammy award winner Eartha Kitt. “She was incredible,” gushed Bear. “Not just watching her recording sessions, but listening to them, you got a very distinctive picture in your mind. It just made coming up with ideas for her scenes that much more fun. She put so much into the performance, that you wanted to do it justice.”

Of course, every Disney villain needs a sidekick and for Yzma, there’s Kronk. “He’s a guy who could have a good legal battle with his career counselor,” noted Tony Bancroft, the charac-

Under the spell of Yzma, the Emperor is transformed into a llama and is aided in his quest to regain the throne by good-hearted peasant Pacha, voiced by John Goodman.



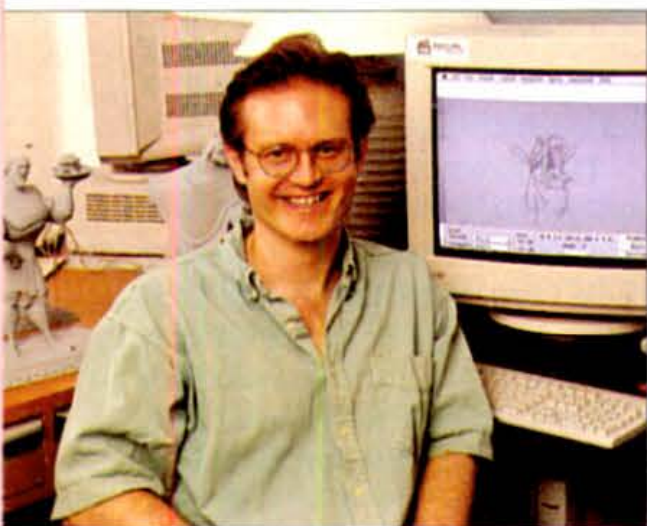
Groovy Director

Mark Dindal, on finding a home at Disney after CATS DON'T DANCE.

By Mike Lyons

When Mark Dindal was in high school and the topic of future careers came up in conversation, he would try to avoid the subject. He would fumble for words, or make something up, not wanting to reveal the truth: he wanted to be an animator.

This was, after all, the late seventies, when pursuing a career in animation was akin to



Dindal, back at Disney as director of *THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE*, combining absurdity with emotion.

the old proverb of peddling igloos to Eskimos. "Now, its almost semi-cool for someone to say they want to be an animator," laughed Dindal.

Actually, animation has become more than semi-cool, making a comeback no one could have predicted, which Mark Dindal has been a large part of.

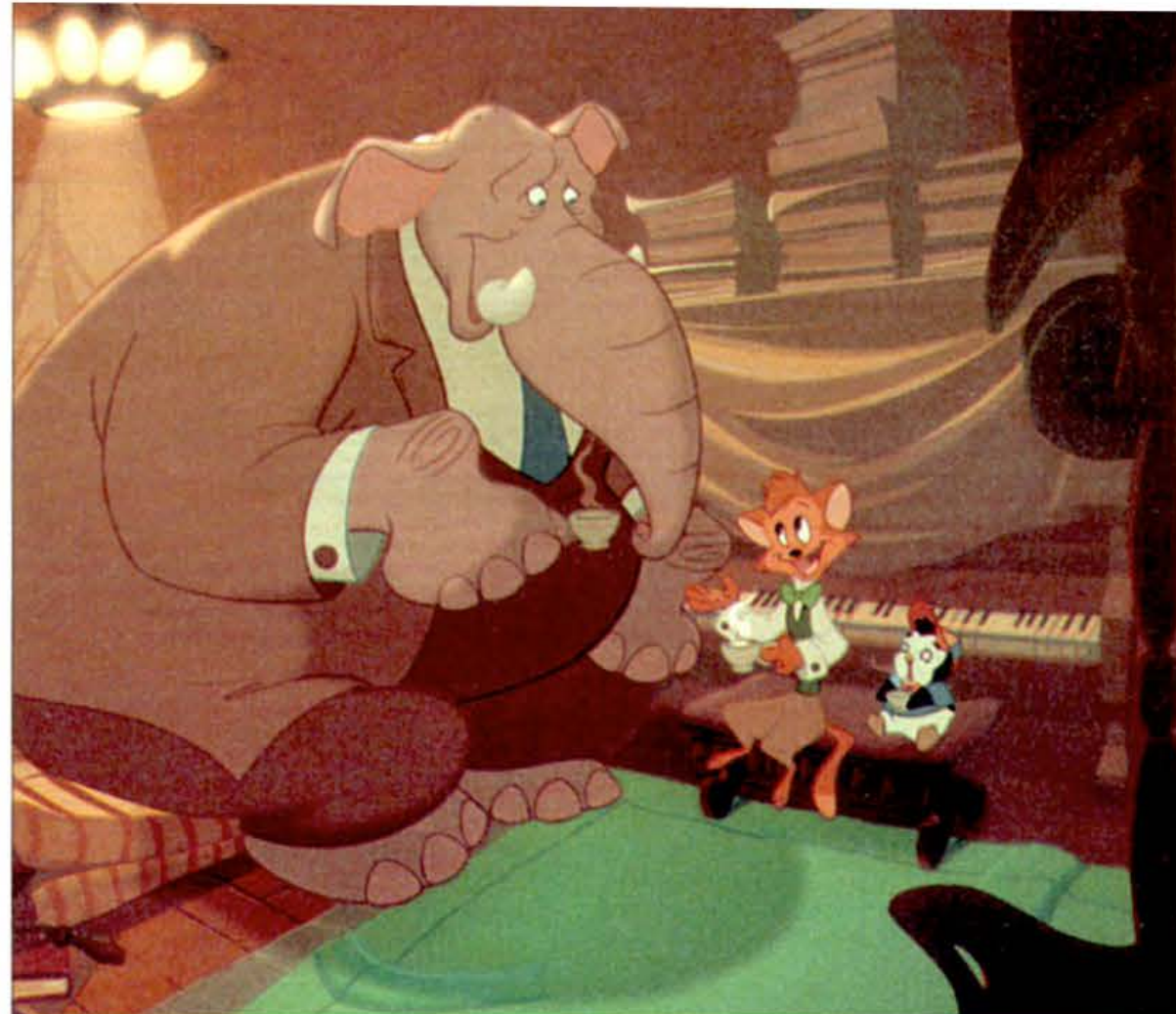
This month sees the release of Disney's *THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE* (December 15th), which Dindal directed. Telling an off-kilter comedic tale of a selfish emperor, who

learns a life lesson after being transformed into a llama by the film's villainess, Yzma, *EMPEROR* has recently been the talk of the industry.

This buzz has not only been about the fact that the film went through some serious story revisions, but also for the fact that it mixes the frenetic pacing and humor of a Warner Bros. cartoon with the heart of a classic Disney fable. Or, what Dindal likes to term "combining absurdity with emotion."

"I like the challenge of getting emotion out of characters that are done without realism in mind," noted Dindal. "There's dimension to the characters and all the animators apply the traditional rules to them. But, when you can take something that's far-out in the imagination and still get a heartfelt moment, it's an interesting combination."

This unique approach, especially at Disney, where traditional fairy tales and fables have



Dindal's *CATS DON'T DANCE* for Turner Feature Animation was a tribute to the golden age of Hollywood musicals with an all-animal cast, now a cult favorite.

long been the norm, have many who worked with Dindal on *EMPEROR*, singing the director's praises.

"He knows how to delegate, entrust and empower artists," said Randy Fullmer, producer of *THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE*. "He lets artists bring their creative ideas to the table. When you trust artists like that, they really take off. Mark intuitively knows that."

When discussing Dindal, Dale Bear, supervising animator for *EMPEROR*'s villain, Yzma, draws a flattering analogy, saying, "He's like Alfred Hitchcock, in a way, because he knew exactly what he wanted. He knew how scenes were to be played and he could just step aside and let you do it."

Growing up in Columbus, Ohio, Dindal always knew he wanted to pursue a career in an-

imation, particularly at Disney. When he graduated from CalArts animation program, in 1980, he was hired by the studio.

"I started about five months after Don Bluth and company had left, so there was a very small group here," remembered Dindal, adding, "There were still some of the veteran animators here and I was able to talk to them and get some insight. So, in spite of the fact that the movies made at that time weren't all that fulfilling, there were things here that I'm glad I had an opportunity to experience."

While at Disney, Dindal worked on such films as *THE FOX AND THE HOUND*, *MICKEY'S CHRISTMAS CAROL* and *THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE*. He left to pursue some outside projects, but returned in 1987, working as visual effects animator for *THE LITTLE MERMAID* and *ALADDIN*. Dindal also directed an animated segment in Disney's 1991 live-action feature, *THE ROCKETER*.

After this, Dindal bid Disney goodbye again to join the burgeoning Turner Feature Animation. Here, he worked on the ambitious *CATS DON'T DANCE*, a tribute to the golden age of Hollywood musicals (this time with an all-animal cast).

The film was to be a grand debut for the new studio, but instead, Turner was bought by

When released in 1997, *CATS DON'T DANCE* was hardly noticed, but has grown in stature with its video release and discovery by a whole new audience.



Warner Bros. who, inexplicably, bestowed no marketing or promotion on the film and in the spring of 1997, CATS DON'T DANCE was released into theatres, without anyone even noticing. Soon after, Turner Feature Animation closed its doors.

Dindal, a Job-like optimist, refuses to hold to bitterness when discussing CATS DON'T DANCE. "It was frustrating that first month or so after it came out. But, I chose not to focus on that, because it was such a valuable experience. I was given an opportunity there to do something that I'd always wanted to do."

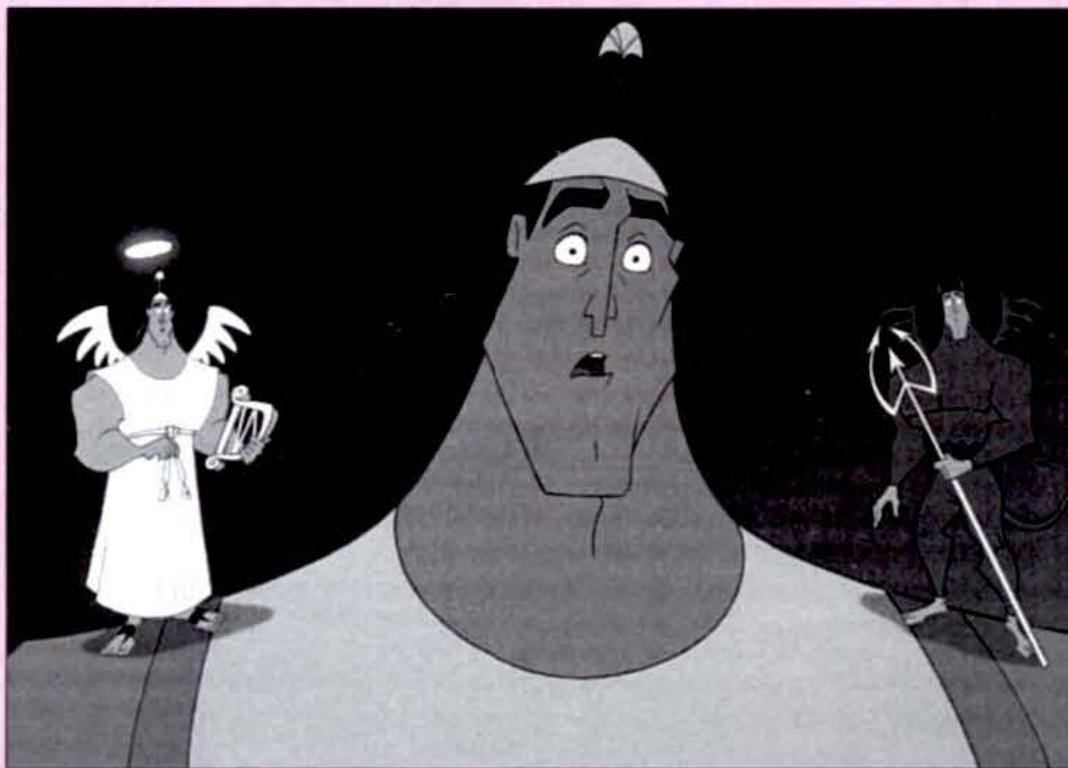
Despite its tiny boxoffice numbers, CATS received critical acclaim, and thanks to home video and cable, has established its own audience. "We went down to Comic-Con [an annual convention of comic book, movie and pop culture enthusiasts], for a presentation," said Fullmer. "When I introduced Mark and mentioned that he was the director of CATS DON'T DANCE, the audience went nuts! The film has developed a real cult following."

With a feature directing credit on his resume, Dindal came back to Disney to helm KINGDOM OF THE SUN with THE LION KING's co-director, Roger Allers. After a massive story revision and a title change to THE EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE, Dindal was assigned as sole director.

In all, Dindal is a long way from those high school days when the mere mention of the word animation brought about flush-checked embarrassment. The director says that he's happy to be back where it all started for him, at a time when animation is at one of its most interesting crossroads. "Computer-generated imagery is certainly the novel tool of the moment and I certainly get swept up in it when I see it. There's certainly been talk for years as to whether that will replace traditional animation. I don't think it will. I think they'll both exist, they will just be different ways to tell a story, the same way that you could paint in oil or watercolors and they would just have different qualities." □

ANIMATOR BRUCE SMITH

"This film is like something from the Zucker Brothers, like AIRPLANE, with its non-sequiturs. That's never been done in an animated film. We loved the cartoon aspect of it all."



Kronk, Yzma's dim-witted sidekick voiced by Patrick Warburton of SEINFELD, finds himself in a moral dilemma. Below: Supervising animator Tony Bancroft.



ter's supervising animator. "He wasn't given very good advice when someone told him to pursue a career as a villain's sidekick. He's really a good-hearted guy, definitely more brawn than brain, but still a good guy."

Once again, for this role, the filmmakers have hit upon the perfect voice—that of actor Patrick Warburton, best known for playing the dim-bulb David Puddy on SEINFELD. "This character is a lot like Puddy," said Bancroft. "They're both in the big, dumb guy mold."

To compliment the smaller cast, EMPEROR took on a sim-

pler tone. Character designer Joe Moshier created a distinctive look of caricatured, flat, angular shapes. With this, art director Colin Stimpson used distinctive Incan styles that influenced him during a 1996 pre-production trip the crew took to Peru. "Most of their art was already caricatured," noted Stimpson.

For the fast-paced, hip film that EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE strives to be, Stimpson also found influence in, of all places, the studio's demure classics, PETER PAN and CINDERELLA. "They both had simple staging and theatrical

lighting," he explained. "They were also lighthearted and appealing, with a gentle, caricatured look."

The paring-down and simplification of the film's story and look meant that the songs had to go. However, these weren't just any generic numbers—the songs for KINGDOM OF THE SUN were written by none other than Sting. You try telling one of the world's most popular recording artists that his services are no longer necessary. "He is so atypical of what you think a rock star is," said Fullmer, adding, "He was a real trooper. He watched us throw out some really good songs. Then, we had the painful moment, where we had to call Sting up and explain that we were making significant changes. He wanted to know if we could still use the songs and at first we thought that maybe we could, but then we realized that particular song structure wouldn't fit and he could see that, as well."

For EMPEROR, Sting did eventually contribute two songs. One is entitled, "Perfect World," which bookends the film, bringing the audience into and out of the story. With a pounding Latin beat, the song is sung by Tom Jones, which essentially encapsulates just how unexpected much of the tone of EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE is and just what differentiates it from recent Disney films.

While it may not contain the rich "Deep Canvas" technology of TARZAN or the CGI realism of DINOSAUR, EMPEROR is indeed its own unique project, that infuses the medium like a breath of fresh air, or in this case, a pie to the face.

"The humor is way beyond anything that Disney has done," said Smith. "This film is like something from the Zucker Brothers, like AIRPLANE, with its non-sequiturs. That's never been done in an animated film, to this degree. We loved the cartoon aspect of it all."

Fullmer added, "Most of the animators have said that they had been waiting ten years to work on a film like this." Hmm, maybe EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE will prove to be the antidote for the dreaded "Troubled Production Virus." □

ROBOCOP:

PRIME DIRECTIVES

The cyborg crime fighter carries on in a series of four kick-ass two-hour movies.

By Paul Wardle

Ever since the premiere of the original ROBOCOP film in 1987, fans of the armored policeman have clamored for more. Two sequels in the early 1990s were generally considered inferior to Paul Verhoeven's original. By the third film, the violence had been toned down, and series star Peter Weller had been replaced by Robert John Burke. Despite the decline of the theatrical versions, Fireworks Entertainment and Rigel have faith in the character, especially since the burgeoning cable networks have need for new projects, and science-fiction movies have a huge audience. They commissioned Toronto filmmaker Julian Grant to produce and direct four two-hour movies which will form a mini-series collectively known as ROBOCOP: PRIME DI-

Francois Yip plays Lexx, one of the mercenaries in RESURRECTION, working for mysterious Ann R. Key.



Marnie Thompson as Abbie Normal, among a group of ruthless mercenaries in Old Detroit, who find and repair Murphy in RESURRECTION, movie three.

RECTIVES. The titles of the four parts are, DARK JUSTICE, MELTDOWN, RESURRECTION and CRASH AND BURN.

With a completely new cast that includes Page Fletcher as the latest incarnation of ROBOCOP, Maurice Dean Wint as a rival cybercop who was once his partner, plus Leslie Hope, Francoise Yip, Kevin Jubinville, Maria Del Mar and others, Grant expects the project to generate a lot of excitement. A website featuring a teaser trailer has caused a minor sensation for ROBOCOP fans logging on. The series debuted on Canadian TV in the Fall.

Rising young Toronto screenwriters Brad Abraham and Joseph O'Brien were given the monumental task by Grant of delivering four completed scripts. The rather shabby offices in which they were interviewed prove Grant's insistence

that the budget is on the screen and not in needless creature comfort. Abraham and O'Brien had written two other scripts as a team, and are developing a TV series which they will focus on now that ROBOCOP is finished.

"Julian Grant had known Joe since 1991," explained Abraham, "and I met Julian at the Fant-Asia Festival last year. Joe and I volunteered our time to help out." After submitting a couple of scripts to Grant, they were called upon to undertake screenwriting duties for Grant's latest film. Added Joseph O'Brien, "Julian was a big fan of the original ROBOCOP movie, and I was too."

To begin, the writers rewatched the previous versions in sequence, and as Abraham put it, "tried to look at them and see what worked and what didn't. [The sequels] just didn't seem to capture the spirit of the

first film. The [character's development in each successive film] turned from this sophisticated adult character toward this kiddie hero. It was kind of sickening to watch."

"Robocop is very much a comic book character," said O'Brien. "He's very iconic. In the same way that people recognize Batman or Superman by appearance, a lot of people recognize Robocop. The Verhoeven film was very serious. If you take the character too seriously, it's almost as bad as if you don't take it serious enough. One of the conscious decisions we made with this was to give ourselves some distance from all the subsequent incarnations after the original film. We set this series ten years after the original film."

This time, change freed up the script from having to use the same characters, and a new cast would not seem out of place. "They're four stand-alone films," explained Abraham. "Each one tells a separate story, but they're all linked together. We had a larger palette to work with. We didn't have to introduce everything in 90 minutes and have it resolved."

"We could create character arcs that would travel much further and consequently they would have more impact," O'Brien added. Yet both agreed that there were consequences at the end of every individual part that would not necessarily alienate the casual viewer who stumbles across part 2, 3 or 4 first.

The two wrote conservative-



Page Fletcher plays Murphy/Robocop in the same insufferable suit created for Peter Weller in the original 1987 Paul Verhoeven film, a killer over four movies.

ly for budgetary reasons, then found they had the capabilities to do more than they thought. The original ROBOCOP was fairly low-budget, but doing four movies at once gave them the funding that would help keep the entire run looking polished. Sets and effects could be used again instead of starting from scratch for just 90 minutes of film. Their background as low-budget independents gave them specific knowledge of how much things cost when you try to enact them. This conservative approach kept rewrites and effects changes to a minimum, and allowed the filming to progress smoothly. The positioning of scenes and shooting schedules also helped keep costs under control.

"It forced us to concentrate on character and internal drama, which is really what made the first film so good," O'Brien said.

The iconographic, stereotypes of many of the characters was a key point that the actors enjoyed. "All the characters represent certain ideals and aspects of culture," said O'Brien. "Sara is the cunning manipulator, Damian Lowe is the charismatic but not too bright corporate executive."

These corporate characters wrestle for control of

ROBOCOP through a multi-national corporation, Omni Consumer Products. Alex Murphy, who became Robocop had a partner, John Cable, whose ex-wife Sara is plotting to overthrow Damian Lowe's authority with a secret organization called The Trust. When she resurrects her late husband and turns him into a second Robocop, the two partners do battle with corporate tyrants pulling the strings. OCP's Robohunters, an army of programmed warriors, engage in an epic confrontation which will ultimately mean control of Delta City, a 1984-like megatropolis that proudly declares itself "the safest city on Earth."

Behind the special effects and cartoon violence of some of the ROBOCOP movies of the

DIRECTOR JULIAN GRANT
"This is a career maker or breaker. Given the chance to work in this environment, I wanted this to be the very best ROBOCOP experience possible for the fans. They're our ultimate bosses."

past, lies a sympathy for the viewer who may be afraid of constantly changing technology and distrustful of corporate control of society. As Brad Abraham added, "At the same time, we sit back and say that technology doesn't really have the capacity to be good or evil. It's the people behind it."

Robocop is the hybrid between man and technology; a character who struggles with his own identity every bit as much as he does his antagonists. "There is that conflict between what the corporate environment wants out of Robocop, and what he himself wants," said O'Brien, "and how other people manipulate him. He's used as a pawn, but at some point wakes up and realizes [what is happening]."

In addition to losing ten years of his life, Alex Murphy has a son who works for The Trust, little realizing that Robocop is his father. The organization's goal is to control Robocop or destroy him. As Abraham put it, "While Alex Murphy is trying to reconnect with his humanity, his son James has been burying his own humanity. When the world's changing around you and everyone's treating you like an outdated piece of machinery, there is a

psychological impact."

Being too close to the material meant that Abraham and O'Brien had the whole eight hour script "rattling around in their head," to quote Abraham. But talks with actors revealed questions they'd never thought of, and all parties benefitted from this discourse. They both credit Julian Grant with having the confidence to allow the screenwriters free access to the set, the editing room, and all aspects of the production. Their input was valued, and they in turn enjoyed actor interpretations of their words which sometimes exceeded their expectations.

Julian Grant, who came to the project after extensive work making action films for HBO and Alliance, among other studios, gained a reputation for bringing in films on time and under budget, an important selling point to backers. Executives at Fireworks had liked Grant's work, and gave him the option to redesign ROBOCOP, with complete creative control. Grant jumped at the chance. A TV series of ROBOCOP in 1994 left the rights to the character in the hands of Skyvision. When Fireworks Entertainment bought the company, Robocop was one of the properties they acquired.

"A 450 page shooting script is not something to be taken lightly," said Grant. He chose to work with like-minded people, among them Johnson and O'Brien. "They were not scared by the size of the project, or the fact that they would be reinventing a cultural icon."

There were over 800 special effects shots required to shoot the series, and Grant enlisted Stargate, a Canadian effects company, with Shaun Smith supervising much of the work. 82 days



Robocop (Fletcher, inset left) and RoboCable (Maurice Dean Wint, inset right) former partners as cops become robot allies in the ruins of Old Detroit.



were scheduled for shooting, and Grant somehow managed to keep his sanity in the center of an effects maelstrom. "Principal photography began in July of 1999," said Grant. "I knew we had an abandoned train station in Hamilton [Ontario] that would serve as a great backdrop for a number of different locations. I knew the streets of Toronto quite well, having shot over 16 feature films here. So, as a result, it was just a matter of saying, 'This is how much money we have; this is how much Robo we want to put on screen. Let's push the envelope as far and as fast and as loud as we can.' The result is **ROBOCOP: PRIME DIRECTIVES**."

Though Grant has the advantage over Hollywood directors who shoot in Toronto without knowing where the good locations are, Grant rebuffed a number of them when he said, "A lot of directors are also spoiled babies, who stamp their feet and whine about how it isn't what they want. You wonder why pictures hit the \$60 or \$100 million dollar mark, and a lot of it is because they don't shotlist. We shotlisted this entire picture. I have over 3000 illustrations, and I just shot what I needed. I didn't spend two days or a week producing 30 seconds worth of material. It was a matter of being very strategic."

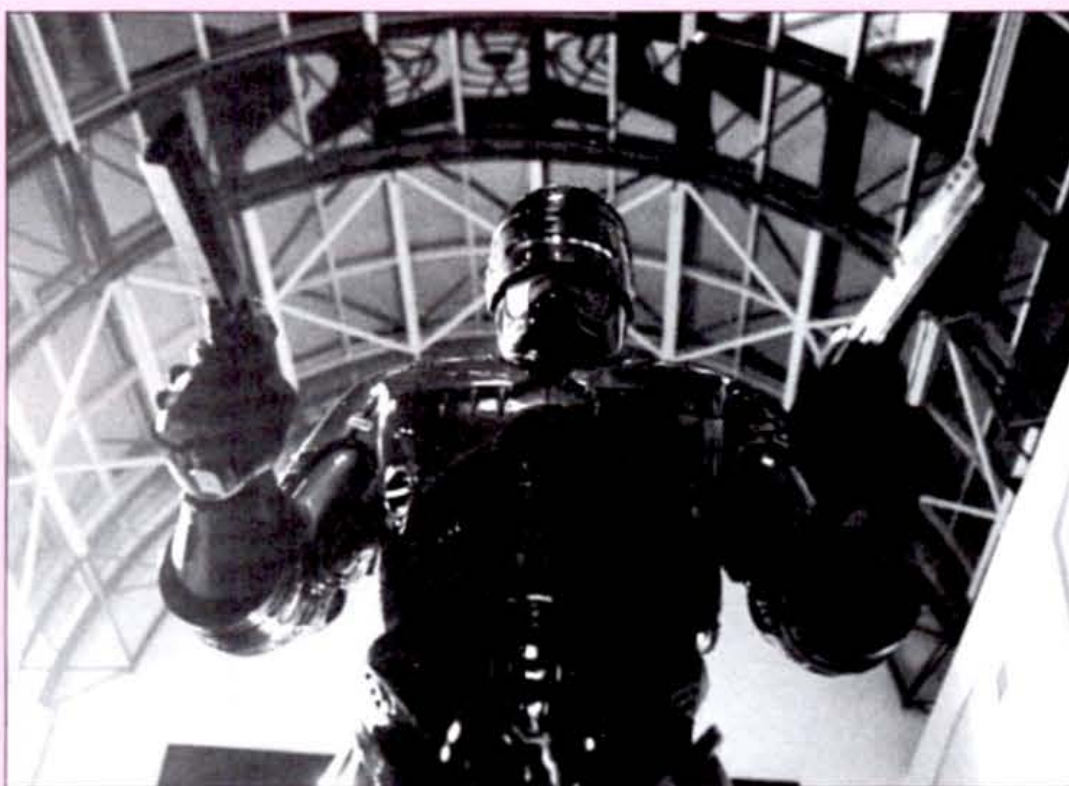
In addition to producing and directing, Grant did all the storyboards himself. "They're not very good!" he admitted, but then, as he said, "I can follow them, which is the important thing."

Unlike some directors who let the storyboard artist direct the movie with their drawings, yet take credit for auteur directing, Grant makes his own choices right down the line. "Win or lose, it's entirely on my head," he said.

In describing his vision for the new series, Grant called it, "spaghetti cyberpunk. Imagine if you would, John Woo and Sergio Leone making a western on the backlot of **THE CROW**. This is not your father's **ROBOCOP**. In this show, we've done more with the cyborgs than have ever been done before." As fans of the character them-

DIRECTOR JULIAN GRANT

"[ROBOCOP: PRIME DIRECTIVE] is 'spaghetti cyberpunk.' Imagine if you would, John Woo and Sergio Leone making a western on the backlot of **THE CROW. This is not your father's **ROBOCOP**."**



RoboCop draws his weapon as he battles RoboHunters (below), an elite team trained to deal with rogue cyborgs in **MELTDOWN**, movie two. Right: Julian Grant, the saga's director, who sought to recapture the darkness of Verhoeven.



selves, Grant, Abraham and O'Brien have tried to make the movie that they'd like to see, and think many fans will be with them.

Still, even with a preconceived vision, was it difficult to make the humanity of the character present itself believably, in the presence of an unfamiliar actor? "One of the worst things I find in films," Grant explained, "is when you have a star, and everyone knows how much jeopardy you put him in, he's never going to get hurt! They're all lovely people,

but as an audience member, I know in advance that they're not going to die. Page Fletcher and Maurice Dean Wint, these were actors who weren't name-brand actors. These are good actors, and so as a result, we weren't worrying about fitting Steve Guttenberg into a role. It was about making the best movie you can."

Grant thinks of **ROBOCOP** as a lone gunman who saves the day; a mythic hero who is also an underdog, and therefore a sympathetic protagonist for viewers. "There but for the

grace of God go us," said Grant. "He's also really fucking cool! There are great big guns that blow great big holes through things. We wanted the armor to be more beat up. It's ten years later. He's not the factory clean model any more. When Cable comes along, who is much sleeker, faster, younger, harder, there's a great duality there. He's been replaced, recalled [like a piece of junk]."

"This is a career maker or breaker," Grant said of the series. "Given a chance to work in this environment, I wanted this to be the very best **ROBOCOP** experience possible for the fans. They're our ultimate bosses. It's the kids on the internet who know about the series; who plead with me: 'Please tell me



this isn't going to be a PC bullshit **ROBOCOP**. Tell me it's going to be dark and dangerous!" I think that's the stuff that really works. We like to call a spade a spade. This is a series that is going to piss some people off! They're going to think it's too violent for television, that it's too bloody. But it's also very funny."

"Our deaths [in the movie] have meaning," the director/producer continued, "It's a violent society we're portraying here, but we're not glorifying that violence. We are saying, 'This is the world you are in. Hang on! This ride will get you wet.'"

Grant urges fans to visit the **ROBOCOP** website at www.robocop.pd.ca for film footage, updates and behind the scenes info. When **ROBOCOP** premieres on U.S. cable in a deal yet to be struck, "you'll believe a cyborg can fly." □

ROBOCOP: PRIME DIRECTIVES

Shaun Smith on RoboWrangling, getting actors in those pesky suits.

By Paul Wardle

Most special effects people have to contend with short scenes in films running 90 minutes to two hours. But how much more difficult must it be to create effects for four two hour movies in the space of a mere six month shooting schedule. In Julian Grant's new epic mini-series **ROBOCOP: PRIME DIRECTIVES**, action-packed fight sequences fill the small screen with explosions, high-powered weapons, and a death rate which exceeds the ebola virus.

Luckily for Shaun Smith, the explosions and makeup effects were left to others. But his task was equally daunting. The armored **ROBOCOP** suits, which appear on screen much of the time, were solely his responsibility. Smith's job was to ready the **ROBOCOP** suits for Alex Murphy (Page Fletcher), and a newer model to be worn by John Cable (Maurice Dean Wint). "That was my whole job," said Smith. "And that was enough! They were designed by Rob Bottin, and built by his shop. Rob hired me to come to Canada with the suits and maintain them. I had to dress the actors."

Wint, in particular, being a large, powerfully built man, posed a problem, since the suit was not designed for his body, and if his weight increased even slightly, his armor was tight and uncomfortable. "It was incredibly difficult," Smith continued, "Every day, we were making adjustments on the suit. One day it would be one thing bothering him, the next day it would be something else. [Both Fletcher and Wint] were being pinched; the weight of [the suit] was hurting their backs or shoulders; something was fitting too tight; it was endless."

"There are three suits for each character," Smith continued, "and they're all hand-made, so they're not exactly the same. So if we'd switch out a leg because a leg broke, then the new leg would have problems we'd have to address."

While Cable's suit weighed 20-30 pounds, according to Smith, the suit for **ROBOCOP**

weighed closer to 50. Puppet parts also provided additional effects showing the suit's capabilities to the viewer without the need for an actor wearing it. "It's actually just a mechanical robot," Smith explained. Different parts are used for individual actions. "From the waist down, we have a robot with a leg that pops open and a gun comes out. We have different chest pieces and arm pieces for different gags."

Each actor took 45 minutes to dress, but, said Smith with a laugh, "Within a week, the A.D.s knocked it down to 15 minutes. It was always a constant rush to get these guys dressed and get them out there."

In addition to dressing Wint and Fletcher each day, there were two stuntmen who needed to be similarly outfitted for the physical sequences that posed real danger. "Julian had them doing incredible stunts!" Smith exclaimed. "Stunts that Robocop had never been designed to do. If you watch the original movie, the suit was basically designed to look good when he was just walking around and not doing much. There are a few quick fight scenes, but you really don't see him doing a lot. In this movie, Julian had him air-ramming and falling through glass windows, fighting in water, all this crazy stuff. So it was just constant repairs all day long, the suits would be breaking left and right."

In real life, were a man to become **ROBOCOP** with this suit, he would be neither invincible, nor a fashion plate. The suit would break after the first serious blow.

Smith (l) and prosthetic supervisor Derek Howard suit-up Fletcher for action.



Fletcher as RoboCop, suffering in the old suit which pinched, took 45 minutes to don, and was heavy, leading to back problems over a long shoot.

"The most difficult part of my job," added Smith, "was keeping my head when something would break and we wouldn't have time to fix it properly. Everything stops while they wait for us to fix the suit."

Re-adjustments were necessary on virtually every take where suits were required. Despite the discomfort and frustration of these realities, Smith said the actors got better as the shoot progressed. "It was quite a chore to make them happy for the first couple of months, but after they mentally gave in to it, they were great. They could stay in the suit all day. The suits were originally made for Peter Weller [star of the original

1987 film]. They didn't fit perfectly, though we tried to find actors who were similar in body type. But Maurice Wint, who plays Cable, is 6 foot 2, and weighs 220 pounds!"

Page Fletcher had to drop some weight before the suit fit him well enough to be bearable, and that may have accounted for his change in temperament when in costume. As for Wint, it was his performance that got him the role, not his size. The idea to find an actor to fit the suit was tossed out, and Wint also got used to it in time. □

FARSCAPE

The Sci-Fi Channel's quirky hit series from down under heads into its third season.

By Anna Kaplan

The title sequence of the Sci-Fi Channel's remarkably inventive prime time series *FARSCAPE* tells viewers the premise. The narration is provided by John Crichton, played by Ben Browder. As startling images of aliens and space flash by, Crichton says, "My name is John Crichton, an astronaut...A radiation wave hit and I got shot through a wormhole...I'm lost in a distant part of the universe on a ship, a living ship, full of strange alien life forms...Help me, help me. Is there anybody out there who can hear me? I'm being hunted by an insane military commander...In everything I can, I'm just looking for a way home." The show begins its third season on the Sci-Fi Channel in March.

Browder plays a contemporary astronaut who goes off on a test run of his *Farscape* module, attempting to use the gravity of Earth to increase its speed in a slingshot-type maneuver. In a reaction related to a solar flare, his module gets sucked into a wormhole, which spits him out on the other side of the universe. Not only does he have no idea where he is, but his ship appears in the middle of a heated battle between a force the audience learns is called the Peacekeepers, and a ship of prisoners attempting to escape from them. Crichton cannot prevent the collision of his ship with a Peacekeeper Prowler. The Prowler crashes into an asteroid, killing its pilot. The pilot's brother, Captain Crais (Lani John Tupu), manages to capture an image of Crichton, and from that moment on embarks on a course of revenge. The audience sees that Peacekeepers, of a race called Sebaceans, look like humans. After the collision, Crichton's module is brought into the ship trying to escape. It is a biomechanoid ship called *Moya*, and Crichton soon comes face to face with the prisoners on board. He can't even understand them until he is injected with translator microbes.

Actors play two of the beings already on



Ben Browder as Crichton argues with an alien Tarlik in the currently airing second season's "Throne For a Loss." The third season debuts in March, 2001.

board *Moya*, while two are actually sophisticated animatronic puppets made by The Jim Henson Company Creature Shop™. Anthony Simcoe plays the gigantic Luxan warrior, Ka D'Argo. D'Argo was supposedly imprisoned for killing a commanding officer. Virginia Hey, blue from head to toe, is Zhaan, a priestess from a very long-lived species. It has taken her centuries to attain her priestly calm. She, like most of the characters, has many a secret. Rygel (voice by Jonathan Hardy) is two-foot-tall, deposed Hynierian sovereign. Hynierians have three stomachs, pass helium when excited, and this one is nasty and self-serving. Pilot (voice by Lani John Tupu) is a five-armed being who can multitask, and is fused to the *Leviathan Moya*. When Crichton arrives, D'Argo, Zhaan and Rygel are trying to free *Moya* and themselves from the Peacekeepers. They are actually just meeting each other, since they were kept in separate cells. They hope that Crichton has technology that can help them. He looks Sebacean—an enemy—so D'Argo knocks him out—with his tongue. They test him and discover that Crichton is not Sebacean. They know nothing of Earth or humans. The prisoners are able to free *Moya* from her control collar, and in a move called Starburst, she gets away from the Peacekeepers, fleeing deeper into unknown regions of the Uncharted Ter-

ritories. One Prowler gets pulled along with them. Its pilot is Officer Aeryn Sun, played by Claudia Black. She also thinks Crichton is Sebacean at first. When the group puts down at a Commerce Planet, Aeryn and Crichton escape. Aeryn contacts the Peacekeepers. Commandos capture D'Argo along with Aeryn and Crichton. Aeryn does not know that Crais is determined to kill Crichton, who he recognizes as the person that he thinks killed his brother. When Aeryn speaks up for Crichton, she is deemed irreversibly contaminated by an unknown alien species, and sentenced to probable death. Crichton manages to escape

with D'Argo and Aeryn. He uses his slingshot theory to get *Moya* away from the Peacekeepers. Now *Moya*, with Pilot, Crichton, Aeryn, Zhaan, D'Argo, and Rygel on board, is lost, and on the run from the Peacekeepers.

So *FARSCAPE* began during its premiere episodes. During the subsequent 21 shows of season one and well into season two, these very bizarre aliens have been literally forced to cooperate and face every kind of enemy from within and without. They have learned to know each other better, and the audience has discovered more about them.

FARSCAPE began with series creator Rockne S. O'Bannon, who thought of this science fiction premise, a human from our time lost in an unknown part of the universe and forced to survive along with a mixture of bizarre aliens, each with their own agenda. O'Bannon had written the feature film *ALIEN NATION*, created and served as executive producer for the television show *SEAQUEST DSV*, and later penned the screenplays for both Peter Benchley's *CREATURE* and the miniseries *INVASION*. He served as story editor for *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* in the mid-1980's, where he met then-CBS-executive David Kemper, who would come on board as *FARSCAPE*'s executive producer. Kemper has worked on many genre shows, including *SEAQUEST*



Virginia Hey as Zhaan (r) and Anthony Simcoe as D'Argo, makeups by the Henson Creature Shop. Below: D'Argo, Claudia Black as Aeryn Sun, Crichton, Zahn and Rygel (front), on board the Moya in season one.

“We sold this series to the Sci-Fi Channel, & Brian Henson & I came out, hugged each other & said, ‘Terrific, we sold the show. How do we do it?’”

—Series Creator Rockne S. O'Bannon—

that appeals to their core audience. We have that freedom, and The Jim Henson Company is willing to ride.”

Added O'Bannon, “We sold this series to the Sci-Fi Channel, and Brian Henson and I came out and hugged each other and we said, ‘Terrific, we sold the show. How do we do it?’”

As they wrote scripts and developed ideas, the series had to be built from the ground up. It was not based on any previous television show, comic, or novel. Although O'Bannon and Kemper acknowledge their debt to all the science fiction that came before, they were building a new world. Prospective writers had to learn that *Moya* was not a military vessel with a command crew and structure, but a living being with a group of disparate individuals on board. Kemper and O'Bannon both describe talking themselves hoarse while explaining to writers that there is no military hierarchy on board *Moya*. Explained O'Bannon, “We are a ship of escaped prisoners on the run, and so these are characters who at the beginning of the first episode, really see each other, and meet, most of them, for the first time. Obviously the character of John Crichton meets them for the first time.”

The next key to *FARSCAPE* was casting Ben Browder as the lead (see sidebar, page 59). He is the only American to play a main acting role. Then, the producers decided to

DSV, *POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY*, and *AMERICAN GOTHIC*, and has written episodes of *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*, *VOYAGER*, *STARGATE SG-1* and *THE OUTER LIMITS*.

To create an entirely alien world, O'Bannon needed the help of The Jim Henson Company, who brought their animatronic expertise to the mix, as well as providing O'Bannon with the support he needed to sell a pilot. He and Brian Henson eventually got an order for scripts from Fox, and O'Bannon brought in Kemper to help write. In the end Fox did not want *FARSCAPE*, nor did any of the regular networks, but ultimately the Sci-Fi Channel did. Said Kemper, “They reach 55 million homes on the Sci-Fi Channel. It's not one of the big four or six networks. You've got a network that deals in a very specialized category, and they can afford to put something on the air



make *FARSCAPE* in Australia, for many reasons, both financial and creative. They found a wealth of talent there, in all areas, bringing fresh new ideas to the series. The rest of the cast members are Australian, most of whom have extensive stage, television and/or film experience. Claudia Black was most recently seen in the feature *PITCH BLACK*, and also guest starred in episodes of *HERCULES*. Virginia Hey, a successful fashion model, is perhaps best known to audiences from her role in *MAD MAX 2: ROAD WARRIOR*. She has appeared in television shows from *PRISONER*, to *ROAR*, *MISSION IMPOSSIBLE* (1988) and *FLIPPER* (1995). Anthony Simcoe could be seen in the feature *THE CASTLE*, or most recently in an episode of *THE LOST WORLD*. Most of the writers are American, as opposed to the directors, who are almost all Australian, as are the craftsmen working behind the scenes. Explained Kemper, "We went to Australia, not knowing what we were going to get. We got people who were hungry for a big science fiction show, incredibly talented people who don't have *STAR TREK*, *X-FILES*, *OUTER LIMITS*, *BABYLON 5* or *DEEP SPACE NINE*. So where

Pilot, the pilot (duh) of the *Moya*, puppeteering by Henson's Sean Masterson, voiced by Lani John Tupu.



Hey as Zhaan, alluring in blue, as the priestess of a very long-lived species.

does a makeup artist practice alien heads? They don't have an outlet. However they have all these things in their head, because they are creative people. We found people who had all this creativity that no one had ever tapped. We got lucky, and we found incredible people."

FARSCAPE's first season was shot at Fox Studios in Sydney, Australia. Second season the production company had to move. Explained Kemper, "Sydney, Australia is a wonderful place to shoot. You are in a city that has a thriving film industry, but there is limited space. When we came in, Fox Studios was the best, and it had just opened. *THE MATRIX* was shot there, and *BABE* was shot there. We were the third or the fourth thing. They had already booked in *MOULIN ROUGE*, and George Lucas had booked in to do the next two *STAR WARS* films. There was a year window. We could have taken studio space somewhere else, and never had to move, but we knew we were starting this huge adventure. We wanted to be at the best facility that we could have while we learned how to make *FARSCAPE*, because we really had to teach ourselves how to make the show. We were in the

best place we could possibly be.

"For years two and three, we have to be someplace else. We found ourselves a nice place and we essentially built our own studio. It's out right in the Olympic Village, in Homebush Bay. From our offices we look out and see that big, beautiful Olympic Stadium that everybody sees on the posters and on TV. Ultimately we did the right thing all around. The first year we needed the comfort of the Fox Studio, the professionalism. We needed the stuff all set up, so we didn't have to think about where the lights would come from. They were

there. We were busy trying to figure out how you make Rygel float above Crichton's head. Now we know how to do it. But when nobody knew anything, and everything was brand new, we didn't also want to be worried about, 'Will the catering truck know how to find us so we can eat lunch?' Now that we have cracked the code about how to make the show, we are fortunate that we found another place, and we concentrated on building our own place."

Everyone involved with *FARSCAPE* praised David Kemper and credits him with allowing the creativity of the huge group of people working on the show to flourish. Said Browder, "David Kemper has such enthusiasm. Talk to our directors, Rowan Woods and Tony Tilse and Ian Watson and Andrew Prowse. These guys are fantastic directors, and the fact that we have been able to hold them is a miracle. Part of that process is David and his enthusiasm and the way he

brings people in and uses their ideas. He makes a point of talking to all the cast. He talks to departments and says, 'What do you want to do?' He takes the directors' ideas on board. He makes *FARSCAPE* a collaborative adventure for everybody. I think it may be the single greatest strength of the show, that it's a fusion and collaboration of ideas."

By the end of season one, which audiences in the United States saw at the beginning of 2000, there were new regular and recurring characters added to the cast of *FARSCAPE*. Gigi Edgley joined the runaways in

Zhaan analyzes the blue gunk seeping from the slain replicant of Aeryn Sun in "Exodus From Genesis," as alien bugs invade and duplicate the *Moya* crew.



"Durka Returns." She is a rebellious young Nebari named Chiana. Her species insists upon conformity, and she was considered a criminal, but she escaped and joined the group. Scorpius, played by Wayne Pygram, first appeared as a new villain in "Nerve." Half Sebacean and half Scarran, he is smart, strong and even more intent on capturing Crichton than was Crais. He tortured Crichton in the Aurora Chair, trying to get him to reveal how to make a wormhole. Moya became pregnant in "They've Got a Secret," and had her baby, a part Leviathan, part Peacekeeper ship named Talyn during "The Hidden Memory." Crais' allegiances shifted as Scorpius attacked him. After a breath-taking cliffhanger at the end of season one, "Family Ties," in second season's "Mind the Baby," the group escaped from Scorpius and the Peacekeepers. Crais stole Talyn, and Moya ran deeper into the Uncharted Territories. There the group found new and old friends and foes.

Explained O'Bannon, "It is our intention to never let the series stay in the same place for any length of time. The first season was really a season of coming together, and there has been a lot of fractiousness among this group. In the second season, there is the opportunity to bring different characters together in a more varied way, and also introduce some new people, new regulars."

Browder summed up the direction of the two seasons, saying about Crichton, "John Crichton is operating in an alien environment with the only tools that he has. He is just literally, trying to stay alive, for most of the first season. He is trying to find out where the bathroom is. Season one was about him becoming acclimated, and season two is really about the ramifications of what can happen to you in an alien environment."

Browder laughed, "It has to do with John's growing insanity, I think, which is reflective of the process of John's trying to assimilate in a culture and in a universe which is hostile to him and his very existence, his soul and his mind and his dreams. [Producer] David [Kemper] finds a beautiful way to utilize that and pull that story out, and it's very good." □

FARSCAPE

BEN BROWDER

The alter ego of Crichton, the show's surprising hero, playing against type.

By Anna Kaplan

It's hard to imagine FARSCAPE without Ben Browder as John Crichton at its center. Browder laughed in response to this statement and asked, "Is that a good thing?" Browder, as Crichton, represents the humans, the audience, an Everyman of sorts who gives those watching a view of another part of the universe. "What a responsibility," he quipped. "We learn to hate ourselves through John Crichton's eyes. He's such good fun to play."

Browder laughs frequently and easily, which is a good thing when dealing with a job as complex and demanding as FARSCAPE. Best known to audiences in the United States for his appearance as "Sam," Neve Campbell's boyfriend in PARTY OF FIVE, Browder did not expect to get the lead in FARSCAPE. In fact, he was not even sure the pilot could be made. Remembered Browder, "It was so standard and typical, in the middle of the process of auditioning for pilots and TV shows. I had done a pilot, which was dying in the pilot process. You start looking for the thing that is going to happen after your pilot dies. This script comes through. I had just done a science fiction pilot, and this other science fiction thing shows up. There is a character that is two-and-a-half-feet tall, and a 15-foot character, and I am thinking, 'How are they going to shoot that?' That was my first reaction. 'This is huge.' Then I went to audition, and went to another audition, and then went to the network, and then went to the network again.



Browder as Crichton, a U.S. astronaut "lost in space" on a ship full of very weird aliens, with Anthony Simcoe as D'Argo.

We came down to the wire. They held me as long as they could hold me. They said, 'Come back one more time.' If you do enough rounds of auditions you become convinced that it's pretty much over with. They would have made up their minds. They made a huge leap of faith. I got very lucky and I got the part."

Because Crichton is just a regular human, albeit a highly educated one with some experience on space shuttle missions, he is not a typical hero. None of the characters in FARSCAPE are what you would expect. Said Browder, "I think there is an element there which is kind of jarring, in a science fiction context. We're used to our archetypes, and we love our archetypes. In some sense, especially in the beginning, all of the characters fulfill an archetype. But what's in-

teresting about participating in the show, all of these archetypes get broken and reshaped. It gives them layers and depth and all the things that you want out of them, or the things you don't want out of them, and that makes it even more interesting. In the early days I took a lot of flack for not being a hero. But to me that seemed to be the interesting choice, that John is out of his depth and he doesn't know how to deal with things. He's scrambling around and he seems lost, because he is. It seems to me to be real. If you look at it in the context of the series, it makes sense. In the beginning I think audiences found it uncomfortable."

Browder, a graduate of Furman University in South Carolina, received acting training at Central School of Speech and Drama in London. He did feature films, from MEMPHIS BELLE and A KISS BEFORE DYING, to BOOGIE BOY. He guest-starred in television, including on MELROSE PLACE and GRACE UNDER FIRE, as well as such telefilms as DANIELLE STEEL'S SECRETS and A WING AND A PRAYER. As John Crichton, Browder really enjoys flexing his acting muscles. He said, "I'm having a great time. I've got the best gig of any actual TV show that I can think of. The stuff that I get to do, especially in season two, is the kind of stuff that they only let you do in drama school. They tell you, 'You'll never get a chance to do this in the working world.' I have gotten to do all the stuff that you never get to do, and it's a gift." □

SAM RAIMI THE GIFT

By Chuck Wagner

In Sam Raimi's latest directorial outing, *THE GIFT*, Cate Blanchett sashays into the South—*AMERICAN GOTHIC* country—playing the role of Annie Wilson, a recently widowed mother with the gift of psychic vision who becomes embroiled in a small town murder. Written by Billy Bob Thornton and Tom Epperson (writers of *ONE FALSE MOVE*)—themselves from Malvern, Arkansas—*THE GIFT* was filmed in Savannah, Georgia and the neighboring communities of Rincon (pop. 600) and Thunderbolt.) Paramount Classics opens the film nationwide December 22.

With *THE GIFT* and the TV series *AMERICAN GOTHIC*, it might be supposed that Raimi is a fan of Southern Gothic. "I haven't really been a fan of it in general," he admitted, "but Thornton and Epperson wrote so clearly about a place and time, with these people that inhabited this town, that I was a fan of this particular script. I read it and thought, 'these are real people.' And it's a movie that presents the supernatural, but with a basis in real characters, which I seldom get a chance to see or read."

Raimi's ability to create atmosphere and creepy feelings with things like trees also comes into play in *THE GIFT*. "We had very little money to make the film," Raimi said. "We had to establish that we were in the Deep South. The town where we filmed was chosen because it had such outrageous trees: fantastic creatures with their gnarled arms and their weird faces. The apple trees there looked like something out of *WIZARD OF OZ*."

"One of the premises of this movie is that the world of the supernatural exists, and we really wanted to make it real for the audience. We felt this would be a great town to shoot in, because every frame would have these fantastic things which are

The director on his supernatural art film.



Raimi rehearses Oscar-winner Hilary Swank as an abused wife. The *EVIL DEAD* auteur noted he doesn't like horror films, "I don't enjoy the experience," he said.

obviously not of this earth. Then maybe it's a smaller step to think that maybe this woman does have this power. It's not so outrageous to think that."

The trees also contained a lot of Spanish moss, but Raimi admitted that the moss was part set dressing. "The moss was probably around 50-50 real vs. set dressing," Raimi said. "I'm told that a lot of cheap Italian horror pictures come to Savannah and shoot there because they have those great Spanish moss trees. They shoot them so fast, I was told, that they don't even shoot sound. They just shoot, the people would talk, and they would just dub the whole thing later! One take of everything."

It's been said that Sam Raimi captures real suspense in his films, which a lot of current slasher/horror films seem to ignore, going instead for sudden shocks. "I would attribute the suspense in this film to the very

real characters in the script that the writers took the time to build. They had the life experiences to draw from and the talent to apply it. Having Cate Blanchett play the role further helped create a reality."

Raimi and Blanchett researched psychics to prepare for the film. "She interviewed card readers, palmists, etc.," said Raimi. "She tried to understand the process that they go through. Because when it came time to photograph Cate Blanchett and these visions she was getting, it was very important that we not show normal Tarot cards and pretend that they had some meaning to them, as I see in a lot of films. When you have Cate Blanchett, you want to let her communicate what she sees. It was best for us to use cards with bland, meaningless symbols and let Cate perform what she saw and felt. The task was upon her to understand the process that these psychics go

through, and find those that she and I believed were real, and then try and understand what happens. Does a feeling come to you? Is it like smelling something? Do you see something out of focus and it comes into focus? We had to know what they went through so that she could play it. I went to some psychics, and she went to some. Some we went to together. We pieced together what might be a common journey that these people go through.

"Then Cate, without my assistance, created the process by which these images would come to her. How vivid they were to her was all in her imagination as an actress. I just watched and photographed. She's so complete and self-contained. But she's also a great collaborator. If there was something in the script she didn't understand, she would ask me. If I didn't have an answer, I would realize that I hadn't figured that moment out either."

And the Southern accent? "She had the accent," Raimi agreed. "I was told she sounded authentic by others who live in the South. I know she worked with a dialect coach, but she also spent some time listening to tapes of the local speech, and when she was there she absorbed as much as she could. I don't know how she did that."

Some of the visions Blanchett's character has are real doozies. Jessica King (played by Katie Holmes), the local big shot's daughter who's missing, floats in a tree in one nighttime vision, her body seemingly dead and wrapped in chains. "That was an image that really troubled me," Raimi said. "When I read it in the script I thought it was a frightening and strange image. But I was concerned about the mixed metaphor of her floating in the tree. I thought, 'It's going to look silly if I put her up there on a wire.' And if I put her in optically as a blue-screen/green-screen effect, I was worried that it



Katie Holmes as Jessica, psychic Cate Blanchett's ghostly vision of a slain Southern tease. Paramount Classics opens Raimi's art film December 22.

would still look stuck-in. But then we thought, okay, we'll make the world an undersea world. It will embrace her. So we blew wind fans on the trees and draped a lot of Spanish moss on them, and slowed down the photography so that the background plate had an undersea look.

"Then Peter Donen, the effects supervisor, said, 'No, don't put her in the blue screen. I said, 'Can we just blow her hair and shoot at like 120 frames-per-second, make it seem like she's underwater?' He said, 'No, it'll never work. It won't seem like it's underwater.' He finally said, 'We gotta put her in a pool. Actually photograph her in a pool to get that weightless body motion in her hair.'

"So that's what we did. Under his supervision, we put her in the pool. She was a real sport. She went in with an oxygen tank saying, 'You're sure this is what you want me to do?' 'Yeah, just go under there,' I said, 'You'll be under there for about five minutes with a diver! Breathe in the oxygen. When I cue you, you'll take the oxygen mask out, and we'll photograph you.' 'Okay, Sam.' And I thought, 'Good Lord! I'd never do that!' But she was a real trouper! Fortunately, we had highly-trained Navy divers alongside her with oxygen masks and everything. Still, the whole concept for me was very frightening."

Raimi admitted that he tends not to watch horror movies for fun, though he appreciates the craft. "I don't enjoy the experience," he said.

And making *THE GIFT* was frightening, from a schedule and budget standpoint. "We could only afford, like, 44 shooting days," Raimi said, "which for me is outrageous. The quickest I've ever shot a picture was *A SIMPLE PLAN*, which was 55 days, but that was really hard for me. This one had more effects, more locations, and more characters. I had to learn to work very quickly. Fortunately, Cate Blanchett is so on-the-ball, it made it possible."

By contrast, *THE EVIL DEAD* shoot took a long time. As the budget dwindled, the crew departed, and those remaining toiled on at low cost. "I was loading the camera and shooting it," Raimi recalled. "Rob Tapert, the producer, was hauling cable. The costs were very low because none of us were being paid! The shoot went on forever. It never stopped, until we didn't have money to buy more film."

THE GIFT's budget is in the neighborhood of \$9.5 million. Modest by the standards of the larger films he's made since *EVIL DEAD*. But going smaller has its rewards. Raimi admitted that he has matured more as a filmmaker and that now he's happy keeping the camera still to record fine actors such as Blanchett. □

SAM RAIMI SPIDER-MAN

The director on his plans to film the Marvel comic.

By Chuck Wagner

"SPIDER-MAN won't be anything like *THE GIFT*," Raimi explained, "but what I did learn after watching Cate Blanchett perform so well for so long, I decided that's what it's all about. It's about a great actor or actress. That's what I need. I think that's why I went after Tobey Maguire so hard. Harder than I should have. Fortunately, the studio got behind me, which I really appreciated.

"I wanted that same experience again, especially with Peter Parker, who I love. I wanted to make sure he's somebody I could talk to...and really in an intimate way, to make sure he understood everything that I did, and that we had asked the right questions. I didn't want to watch Peter Parker say something to Aunt May in a way I thought was not really Peter Parker, and yet be afraid to approach him, or have any of that nonsense about lack of communication. I wanted somebody that would work hard at being real. Because that's the thing about Spider-Man. *BATMAN* and *SUPERMAN* are great movies, but they're more fantastic-world movies with these superheroes with outrageously funny villains in them. *SPIDER-MAN* I want to make more real-world. Peter Parker is real, and something fantastic happens to him."

Raimi also acknowledged that the audience has expectations of how *SPIDER-MAN* should be.

"That's brand new for me," Raimi said. "The audience already has it in their minds who Peter Parker is, who Aunt May

is, who Uncle Ben is, and you can get it wrong. I not only have to meet their expectations, I have to go beyond them. I have to choose so right that they'll think, 'He's the soul of the character.' People will say, 'Are you crazy, that isn't Uncle Ben.' But what I'm going to be looking for is the soul of the character, whether or not he looks like him, or not. So he's truly the guy that we've come to know in the comics. Of course Uncle Ben's a bad example, because he's only in it for about a page and then I kill him!"

Will composer Danny Elfman perform in *SPIDER-MAN*?

"Danny Elfman's going to do the score for *SPIDER-MAN*," Raimi said with a smile. "Perform? I hope not. You haven't seen him act!" □

Scott Leva as the web-spinner in 1987 when the project was at Cannon Films. Raimi starts filming in January.



SCARY MOVIE

By Thomas Doherty

A madcap send-up of the latest teen slasher cycle seems redundant: one of the trademarks of the SCREAM/I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER franchise is their kinship not with horror films but slapstick comedies. Self-parodies on arrival, the postmodern stabfests unspool with tongue planted so firmly in cheek they risk lockjaw. Such good-natured self-deprecation would seem to deny a demolition crew the one quality that parody demands: a serious model to mock. Consider the knowing wink in the emblematic backtalk from SCREAM 2: "What's your favorite scary movie?" rasps the voice on the telephone, to which the wiseacre snaps back, "SHOWGIRLS."

Though the mistitled SCARY MOVIE ranks well below SHOWGIRLS on the laugh meter, it wracks up enough scattershot yuks to justify a rental. Setting out to do for exploitation what he did for blaxploitation in I'M GONNA GET YOU SUCKA (1988), director Keenen Ivory Wayans maintains such a frantic gags-per-screen-average that he only needs to hit one in three punch lines to supply a junior high class clown with a semester's worth of fart, snot, fairy, fellatio, breast, and penis jokes.

Like all parody, SCARY MOVIE thrives because it knows the originals cold—and knows the audience knows. Chapter and verse trashings of the SCREAM/SUMMER series provide the main fodder for gonzo reenactments, but samplings from THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT, THE SIXTH SENSE, THE MATRIX, and, of all things, the shower scene from PORKY'S are tossed in for the hell of it. Less a full-on satire than a collection of set pieces strung together by jump cuts, the film careens maniacally from vignette to vignette, kind of like the white-masked, black-robed, knife-wielding goblin who now registers his emotional interior with a malleable face mask.

A gifted teenage cast of actors in their late twenties and early thirties plays the standard-issue clique of future DOAs at the eponymous B.A. Corpse High School. Tackling the coveted role of prologue victim, a buoyant Carmen Electra confronts two traffic signs: "Safety" and "Death." She veers towards death, pauses for a slo-mo scamper through the sprinklers in her undies, and gets run over by Mom and Dad, who do not have their eyes on the road. In the Neve role as the annoyingly nice girl, the virginal Cindy Campbell (Anna Faris) will not permit her frustrated boyfriend Bobby (Jon Abrahams) anywhere near third base. Beauty

Exploitation parody has laughs worthy of a rental.



Wes Craven meets THE MATRIX: Anna Faris drop kicks ghost face. Director Keenen Ivory Wayans spews enough sophomoric humor for a whole semester.

queen wannabe Buffy (Shannon Elizabeth) is the saucy high school slut, whose decapitation does nothing to crimp her bitchy style. The semi-closeted Ray (Shawn Wayans) sashays through some serious issues of sexual identity, something his dimbulb girlfriend Brenda (Regina Hall) should suspect when the sight of her in full football gear turns him on.

Further down the IQ food chain, the pot-headed Shorty (Marlon Wayans) shuffles from bong to bong in a fog of cannabis smoke, but the mentally challenged small-town cop Duffy (Dave Sheridan, in a role custom designed for Jim Carrey, director Wayans's old comrade on TV's IN LIVING COLOR) may be sharper than his lack of bowel control indicates. Meanwhile, the aggressive TV reporter Gail Hailstorm (Cheri Oteri) will do anything—really, anything—for a scoop: she plies Duffy for deep background and shoves a microphone into the faces of teen victims in mid-death throes. All in all, the cast is so engaging that their inevitable, sequential termination makes one mourn their departure, something not always true of the victims in the original series.

The irreverent black humor—that is, "black" as in African American—is the freshest element in the genre desecration. Though horror has always scored high with the urban African American demographic, the current teen slasher cycle is mainly a whitebread oeuvre, aimed at hip suburban mallrats. Given that the number of victims of color per film comprises a very small body

count, the affirmative action undertaken by the brothers Wayans—Shawn and Marlon Wayans also co-wrote the screenplay—enacts just reparations on the Hollywood product line. Especially amusing is a sequence set in a motion picture theater where patrons are trying to enjoy SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE, Miramax's last big hit. Playing off the stereotype of the loquacious African-American moviegoer, the loudmouthed Brenda drives her fellow patrons into a homicidal frenzy with her screen backtalk. Pushing the goblin aside, the mob of enraged cineastes descends with knives gleaming. "You ruined SCHINDLER'S LIST for me!"

Historically, the success of a dead-on parody tends to signal the last gasps of a cycle, but since slasher films are already in a baroque phase, SCARY MOVIE seems unlikely to put a stake through the heart of the franchise. Still, the next time the energetic goblin chases a nubile blonde through the neighborhood, the memory of his blissed-out, wide-mouthed grin will have audiences of all ages less likely to scream with fright than squeal with laughter. □

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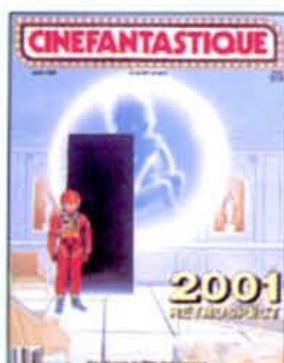
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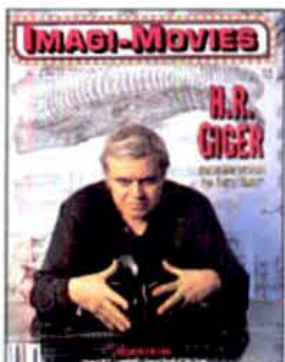
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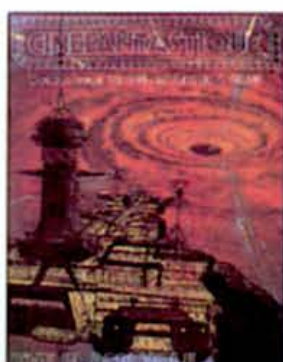
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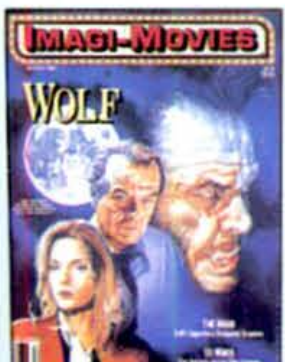
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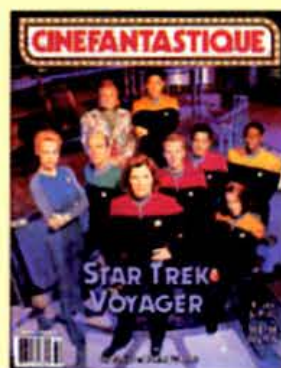
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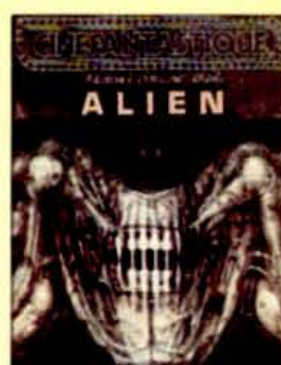
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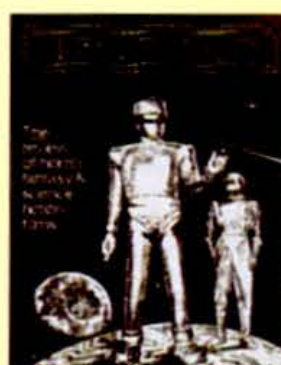
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